

Turn-taking in English Conversation

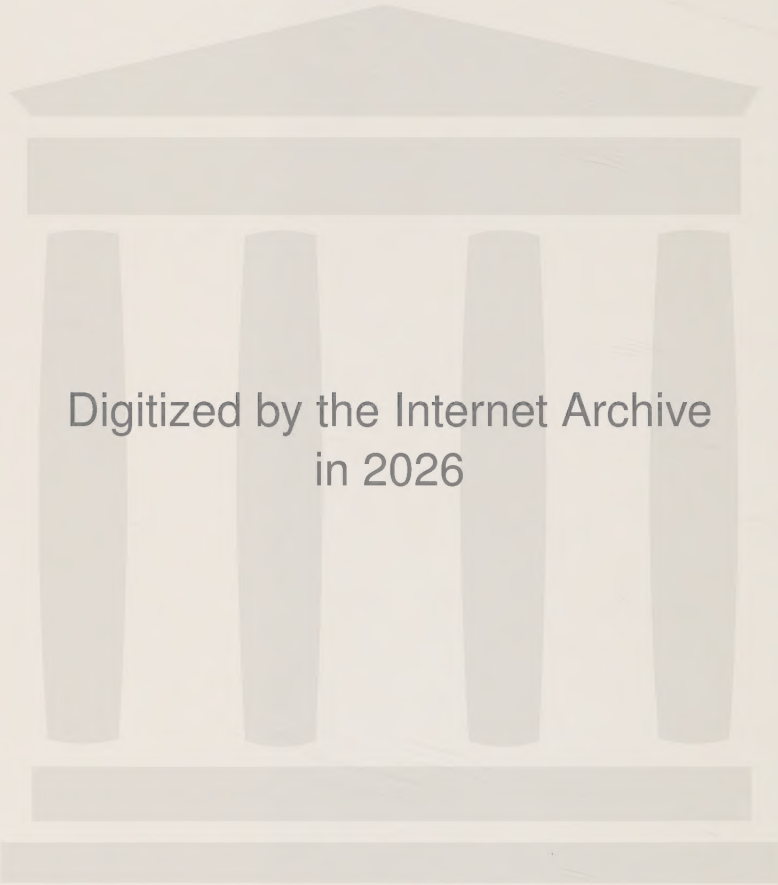
Bengt Oreström

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CONVERSATION



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TURN-TAKING IN ENGLISH CONVERSATION

BY
BENGT ORESTRÖM

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No human has ever learnt to speak
except in a dialogic context

Jaffe & Feldstein 1970:5

Preface

The present study has been carried out within the framework of the Survey of Spoken English, a project organized by the Department of English, University of Lund, between 1975 and 1981 under the direction of Jan Svartvik. The project was supported financially by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation and the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation.

I am indebted to my supervisor, Jan Svartvik, for opening my eyes to how the problems could be structured and for his many precise turns and general support, to Randolph Quirk and his colleagues at the Survey of English Usage, University College London, for giving me unlimited admission to the audio-taped source material, to my friends at the English Seminar for their valuable suggestions, to Lars Hermerén for a good number of critical remarks, to Jens Allwood for his comments on Chapter 1, to Lennart Månsby for programming the material, to Mats Eeg-Olofsson, Horst Löfgren, and Bo Zöger for their statistical advice, to Barbara Lindberg for reviewing my English, to Ann-Mari Gayle for skilfully typing the manuscript, to Oscar Forsheden for reading the proofs, and last but not least, to my wife, Kerstin, for helping me to close my eyes to all difficulties as they arose.

Earlier versions of chapters 2, 3, 5, and 6 have appeared as project reports from the Survey of Spoken English and the essentials of Chapter 4 are published in a summarized form in a volume from a symposium on impromptu speech in Åbo, Finland.

Finally, special thanks go to the Shetland Islands for giving me the necessary mental fuel at a time when I needed it.

Lund and Lerwick,
June 1983
Bengt Oreström



Out Stack, Unst, Shetland

Contents

1	LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION	11
	Notes	17
2	TURN-TAKING	18
	2.1 Introduction	18
	2.2 Conversation	20
	2.3 Speaking-turns and back-channel items	23
	2.4 The turn-taking process	26
	2.5 The turn signals	29
	Notes	37
3	AIM AND MATERIAL	39
4	TURN-YIELDING SIGNALS	47
	4.1 Method	47
	4.2 Results	61
	Subordination and nucleus (61), Monosyllabic pitch level and width, stress, step-up in pitch, and end of TU (63), Tempo (64), Loudness and polysyllabic pitch level and width (65), Syntax (65), Pause and semantics (67)	
	4.3 Discussion	68
	4.4 Summary	77
	Notes	79
5	TURN LENGTH	82
	5.1 Introduction	82
	5.2 Method	83
	5.3 Results	85
	Number of turns (85), Length of turns (86), Sex (96), Age (98), Manner of recording (98)	
	5.4 Summary	101
	Notes	102

6	LISTENER ACTIVITY	104
6.1	Introduction	104
6.2	Method	106
	Types of back-channel items (106), Assertions and elicits (108)	
6.3	Results and discussion	121
	Formal aspects (121), Contextual aspects (126), Temporal aspects (128)	
6.4	Summary	131
	Notes	132
7	SIMULTANEOUS SPEECH AND INTERRUPTION	135
7.1	Introduction	135
7.2	Method	137
7.3	Results and discussion	144
	Formal aspects (144), Sex (146), Func- tional aspects (148), Tempo and loudness variations (148), Speech disruptions (154), Discourse categories (156), Other func- tional aspects (161)	
7.4	Summary	166
	Notes	168
8	CONCLUSION	172
	APPENDICES	177
	REFERENCES	183
	INDEX	191

1 Language and communication

Halliday (1973a:9ff) discusses the various functions of language, taking the question "what is language?" as his point of departure. He maintains that there is no straight answer to that question, which is diffuse and therefore to some extent wrongly put. It is just as impossible to give a straight answer to such as, for example, "what is literature?". It would be as if someone asked what colour a lighthouse shows. The answers to these questions, of course, are depending on from which angle they are approached. Instead, there are a number of levels along which language can be studied, each level representing specific communicative functions. Halliday lists seven important functions of language, or rather, functions that language sets off. He calls them 'models' and they are uses that the child takes language to be and develops in the acquisition process.¹ He also points out that some of the models will overlap:

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1 <i>Instrumental</i> : | Language as a means of getting things done, to satisfy material needs |
| 'I want' | |
| 2 <i>Regulatory</i> : | Language used as an instrument of control |
| 'Do as I tell you' | to regulate the behaviour of others |
| 3 <i>Interactional</i> : | Language as it functions in social interaction between the self and others, to define and consolidate the group, to include and to exclude, showing who is 'one of us' and who is not |
| 'Me and you' | |
| 4 <i>Personal</i> : | Language as a form of a person's own individuality |
| 'Here I come' | |
| 5 <i>Heuristic</i> : | Language used as a means of exploring the environment, of investigating reality, |
| 'Tell me' | |

of learning about things

- 6 *Imaginative*: 'Language about language', the use of language to create one's own environment, a means that sets the imagination free
- 7 *Representational*: Language used as a means of communicating about something, of expressing positions, conveyance of a message.

It is obvious that Halliday's models reflect language as a communicative tool centering around its socio-psychological aspects. He also argues that different uses of language may be seen as realizing different communicative intentions. He then accepts both Malinowski's (1969) view of language as multifunctional and his definition of meaning as function in context.

Much has been written about what communication is and what it achieves and it would lead too far to take up all aspects here. Therefore, only a limited number of more central views will be mentioned. McQuail (1975:1) maintains that:

Communication underlies all social activity ... All social interaction is necessarily communicative and² any social process presumes a communication process²

He sees human communication as the relationship between a communicator and a receiver implying a mutual awareness or orientation of one to another, an external referent; what the message is about, a common language, and some sharing of experience. It also indicates some activity and change of state as a result of the act. Each participant is influenced by the other one(s) in some way. The process of communication is described as follows (p. 14):

Any communication act involves a sequence of events which takes the basic form of a decision to transmit meaning, the formulation of the intended message into a language or code, and an act of transmission and of reception by someone else.

But McQuail also points out that this view of communication may be misleading because most communication events are much more

complex than this model suggests and also because a bias is written into this particular formulation.

Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson (1967) claim that "communication is a *conditio sine qua non* of human life and social order" (p. 13) and that many studies "limit themselves to the study of communication as a one-way phenomenon (from speaker to listener) and stop short of looking at communication as an *interaction* process" (p. 14). They have a very broad definition of communication and the two terms 'communication' and 'behaviour' are used virtually synonymously (p. 48f):

there is no such thing as nonbehavior or, to put it even more simply: one cannot *not* behave. Now, if it is accepted that all behavior in an interactional situation has message value, i.e., is communication, it follows that no matter how one may try, one cannot *not* communicate. Activity or inactivity, words or silence all have message value: they influence others and these others, in turn, cannot *not* respond to these communications and are thus themselves communicating. It should be clearly understood that the mere absence of talking or of taking notice of each other is no exception to what has just been asserted. The man at a crowded lunch counter who looks straight ahead, or the airplane passenger who sits with his eyes closed, are both communicating that they do not want to speak to anybody or be spoken to, and their neighbors usually "get the message" and respond appropriately by leaving them alone. This, obviously, is just as much an interchange of communication as an animated discussion.

They maintain that an axiom can be postulated: "*one cannot not communicate*" (p. 51). It is true, of course, that a person who ends up in a situation where he or she is perceived by another person would communicate with the other in the broadest sense. In personal encounters, people pick up clues from each other's behaviour as both activity and inactivity reveal various sorts of information. We both listen to and 'read' each other and we are judged by others on the basis of our total performance. The clues are then considered and internalized and conclusions are drawn from them and are used for setting up a hypothesis about the person in question ('inner monologue'). Subsequent behaviour from that person will be used for checking the hypothesis, to confirm, modulate, or dismiss it.

Luft (1970:11ff) illustrates human behaviour from the point of view of self-disclosure with the help of a four-celled para-

digm, the 'Johari Window', named after its two originators, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham:

	Known to self	Not known to self
Known to others	open	blind
Not known to others	hidden	unknown

Fig. 1. The Johari Window.

The open quadrant in the figure represents a person's public area, for example things such as I know that I am wearing rust-coloured shoes, something that others know too. The blind area could be exemplified with a habit a person is unaware of but that is very annoying to others. The hidden area represents knowledge that the individual wants to keep to himself. Finally, the unknown area contains things that neither the person himself, nor any other knows anything about. The hidden and unknown areas are subject to speculation from others. Development of the four quadrants is in close connection with the process of the actor's relations. The better two people get to know each other, the smaller the hidden area and the bigger the open area will become. The Johari Window is a model for showing awareness of the self and others expressed via communication.

Satir (1972:3ff and 112ff), who has concerned herself with the conditions of communication from the viewpoint of how relations are created and developed (or, in terms of the Johari Window, factors underlying the interplay of the quadrants), sees the relationship between the individuals as a system consisting of several interrelated parts that are coherently ordered: "Each part acts as a starter to all the other parts". She uses a distinction between two types of system, 'open' and 'closed', which differ in the way they react to change from the outside. An open system provides for change and its internal structure and processes accommodate to the environment. A closed system provides for very little or for no change at all. She states four important

ingredients which together make up a prerequisite for the open system to be in operation: self-esteem, direct and clear communication, overt and flexible rules, and an openness in the relationship. These factors form a composite overall context, a meaningful world, as it were, in which it is meaningful to talk and listen, to perform social and linguistic interaction.

Dance (1970), after having examined the multitudinous attempts at defining the concept of communication that have been presented, notes that none of the ninety-five definitions he found adequately covers its entire spectrum and concludes (p. 209f):

It is difficult to determine whether communication is over-defined or under-defined but certainly its definitions lead the experimentalist, the historian, and the theoretician alike in different and sometimes contradictory directions ... A variety of approaches and methodologies is often beneficial when dealing with a concept as complex as communication and we should beware of seeking or, worse, finding a single, rigid, exclusive definition.

Rommetveit (1972:31f) has summed up the discussion of communication as seen from the perspective of 'communicative acts'. The basic distinction here is between 'conveyance of information', ie things that, although they may release some sort of decoding process, have no underlying intention and occur irrespective of the presence of a person (eg falling leaves announcing the advent of autumn, footprints in the sand, etc.), and 'conveyance of a message', which has a communicative intent (eg twigs that have been intentionally broken off to indicate a route, smoke signals, etc.). Only the latter, 'message', is to be regarded as a communicative act.³ Fundamentals of this act are an intention to make something known, encoding of the intended message in a medium, and decoding of the message, which makes it possible for a receiver to understand the intention of the encoding. Decoding is to develop a mental picture of the things referred to and is a reflection of the encoding, an attempt to arrive at the thought processes of the encoder. Jespersen (1924:17) states:

The essence of language is human activity - activity on the part of one individual to make himself understood by another, and activity on the part of that other to understand what was in the mind of the first.

But full agreement (congruence) between encoding and decoding will not be obtained because of the different experiential histories of the interactants, different connotations that the code gives rise to, etc.

It will be evident from what has been said that communication is no blanket term but is defined differently in different disciplines and from study to study. Whatever stand one may take in this complex matter of human communication, there seem to be two distinct levels. First, successful communication implies that there is a high agreement between encoding and decoding, that the purpose of an utterance is clear (whether, for instance, it aims at giving or extracting information), that the referential spectrum is clarified (what, who, where, when, etc.), and so on. Second, of equal importance are things like the conduct of the interactants (whether they behave in a reciprocally accepted way), the perceived sincerity of the partner (whether he is honest or deceitful), and whether or not they attempt to cooperate by showing an interest in the interaction, come up with straight and constructive criticism or with irony and sarcasm, etc.⁴ Watzlawick et al (1967:51f) refer to these two levels as 'content' and 'relationship' levels of communication; content of message on the one hand, and 'this is how I see it', 'this is how I see you', on the other.

To sum up, a prerequisite for successful communication is that the intentional, referential, and interactional functions of language are clarified and that the participants have access to these domains. Oral communication between individuals is a socio-psychological and linguistic process which takes place in a here-and-now situation on a content and a relationship level. The present study will focus on one aspect of the relationship (me-and-you) level of communicative interaction, namely how people alternate to have the floor in conversation.

Notes

- 1 Cf Malinowski's (1969:327) view that "Language in its structure mirrors the real categories derived from practical attitudes of the child".
- 2 Nichols & Stevens (1957:47) in a study of American English found that 70% of the day people are involved in verbal communication. Of this, 45% is spent listening, 30% talking, and 16% reading.
- 3 Cf Bühler's (1934:28) division of the language functions into symbol, symptom, and signal.
- 4 Cf Allwood's (1976:143ff) discussion of 'full-blown communication'.

2 Turn-taking

2.1 INTRODUCTION

When humans want to use language to communicate orally with each other, they are faced with what Lewis (1969:5) calls a 'coordination problem'. Avoidance of collision is one obvious ground for this coordination of actions between the participants. In order to communicate efficiently and successfully, they will therefore have to agree to follow certain rules for interaction. By 'rules' is here meant certain conventions, reflecting tacit rights and obligations, which are not immediately linguistic but yet intimately related to the linguistic activity. The interactants have to adopt an overall form for interaction and once such a form has been established, it will work normatively, ie the participants try to observe it and they expect their partners to do the same. Rommetveit (1974:54) talks about 'contracts' that are reciprocally adhered to in human discourse. When such a convention has been widely accepted in a speech community, it can be referred to as 'standardized usage' (Cushman & Whiting 1972:221).¹ A rule of speaking is thus a factor that operates for or against certain linguistic behaviour. Constructive communication requires cooperation concerning the various rules that build up the communicative network. Cooperative activity presupposes ethical considerations and shared attitudes towards these rules (Allwood 1976: 56f). In Lakoff's (1972:916) terms we might say that cooperation concerning these rules belongs to the assumptions that are made in normal conversation. One such rule of speaking is that no one monopolizes the floor but the participants take turns to speak. This phenomenon, labelled 'turn-taking', is a central and structurally relevant concept in linguistic interaction.²

Turn-taking seems to be a phenomenon deeply rooted in human

communication founded on a mutual awareness of sharing something. It has been found that, even at a very early stage in life, the child begins to acquire knowledge about this organization of togetherness and its characteristic patterning which exists in and builds up the dialogue. Contrary to what was earlier believed - that 'cooing' and 'babbling' were merely for training the speech organs, a procedure for later production of speech sounds - we now know that the young child is cooing also as a response to the adult's talk. Bullowa, Fidelholtz & Kessler (1976) observed that communicative interaction, manifested in eye glances and taking place from the first week, was gradually developed into an interaction with sounds where the adult talked and the child was cooing. What is of interest here is that the child really converses and, at the early age of three months, it has normally learnt the role play of conversation. Bateson (1979), who made videotaped recordings of such conversational behaviour between adult and child, called 'proto-conversation', found that there were clear alternations of speaker; when one of them stopped, the other went on. Snow (1977), who made a longitudinal study of two girls and followed them from the ages of 3 to 18 months, observed typical sequences of interaction where the mother talked and smiled at the child and where sounds and other activities from the child were commented on verbally. Snow concludes that the mother's conversation with the child is not a monologue but is shaped by her as an elementary kind of dialogue in which she treats the eye glances, facial expressions, and sounds from the baby similarly to utterances in a conversation fitting in her own utterances in such a way that they alternate with those of the child. Because of this reciprocal adjustment and growing awareness of the other as a communication partner, Snow suggests (p. 11):

the interactions between these mothers and babies can best be described as conversational in nature, and that the changes in the maternal speech result from the development of the baby's ability to take her turns in the conversation

Through this interactional process, the child becomes aware of the rhythmical turn-taking patterning of human interaction and the acquisition of this patterning would then be part of the child's socialization process through which the child, by the

acquisition of the attitudes, skills, values, etc. prevailing in the speech community, learns to be a member of the adult society and, indirectly, also learns about his role in the group.

2.2 CONVERSATION

According to Halliday, McIntosh & Stevens (1964:94), we have a range of speech styles, 'registers':

Every speaker has at his disposal a continuous scale of patterns and items, from which he selects for each situation type the appropriate stock of available harmonies in the appropriate key.

We are intuitively aware of what can be said and what cannot be said in a given situation, in a specific place, on a specific occasion, to specific people. Every such situation where language is used (speech event) has its own unwritten conventions about what is appropriate in the matter of communicative conduct. We have a repertoire of linguistic behaviour which enables us to use different language in the family, to the employer, during a hospital visit, at a funeral, in front of a TV camera, and so on. This would indicate that the selection of a particular register is rule-governed, triggered off by the actual situation, and is the result of a monitoring process. The ability to make the appropriate choice of a certain register in a certain situation is part of a person's communicative competence. The registers form a set of various communicative patterns and involve not only linguistic but also interactional adjustments. This latter aspect has to do with the relationship between the speakers, which role to assume on a given occasion, when and how to participate in the situation, etc. One example is the sequential ordering of participation where the distribution of speaking-turns is either decided beforehand (eg a ritual procedure like a wedding ceremony) or is dealt with locally as the talk proceeds (eg a family conversation).

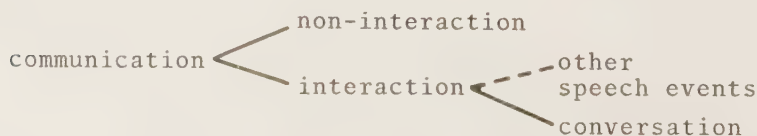


Fig. 2. Communication, interaction, and conversation.

Different speech events determine who speaks when, what, and for how long and the underlying rules of participation will vary from being relatively fixed and predetermined to being relatively open to the participants' personal options. Moreover, a participant in a debate can claim his right to finish if he is being interrupted or speak if he finds that somebody is monopolizing the floor. In the classroom, the teacher both distributes the utterances and controls their length. An interviewer can cut the interviewee short and change the topic abruptly. But a person in a conversation is largely dependent on the other participants' willingness to let him in. Apart from these constraints, the turn-taking process has been found to show cultural variation, for example pause length between people's utterances and answers to questions (Philips 1976).³

What is conversation? First, it seems difficult to give a brief, simple and clear-cut definition since conversation is a speech event which involves a mutual exchange of information, thoughts, ideas, and emotions which takes place on a here-and-now level and is therefore both a social and psychological, as well as a linguistic activity. A definition must then include both linguistic and non-linguistic criteria if it is to be meaningful, relevant, and comprehensive.

Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974:696) note that conversation is a member of a set of 'speech exchange systems' and Goffman (1963:83) refers to it as a form of 'focused interaction'. Abercrombie (1963:11) gives one general characteristic of conversation:

Under 'conversation' I would include all those linguistic occasions when there is the *opportunity* for give and take; when it is understood that, at least in theory, there is more than one active participant, however long one of the participants may go on for.

Abercrombie's view offers problems, however, when it comes to defining 'opportunity' and 'understood in theory'. Further, he does not mention whether 'active' refers only to speech activity or if it also includes non-verbal communication.

Sacks et al (1974) have a narrower definition of conversation in this respect, abandoning the idea of potential for actual speaker-change. According to them, one of the features that char-

acterizes conversation is that "Speaker-change recurs, or at least occurs" (p. 700). Their statement that speaker-change must be effected before we can talk of conversation therefore seems to be a more fruitful and workable definition; 'without speaker-change no conversation'. Jaffe & Feldstein (1970:9) refer both to the saliency of speaker-switch and its 'oscillating rhythm' in conversation and Yngve (1970:568) notes that "The passing of the turn from one party to another is nearly the most obvious aspect of conversation". Miller (1963) even suggests that it is a language universal.

Second, granted that no simple and clear-cut definition of conversation can be arrived at, another approach would be to try to describe it in terms of a number of factors and compare it with, eg a debate or meeting led by a chairman. Both are examples of communicative interaction but different speech events. Contrasted, these two speech events will show that the following factors are typical of conversation. These are, of course, tendencies and not absolute differences and the list can be supplemented:

- Private rather than public
- Casual and spontaneous
(Not scripted or premeditated;
planning and production are
more or less simultaneous)
- Not institutionalized
(Informal setting; turn order,
length, aim, and topic are
not specified in advance)
- Focus on the interaction
(Facts are not always central)
- Freedom to introduce new topics
- Frequent use of 'tag questions'
and 'intimacy signals'
(*isn't it, you know*)
- Frequent use of 'listener responses'
(*m, yes, that's right*)

Crystal & Davy (1969:102ff) mention other important factors typical of conversation, for example, the 'inexplicitness of the lan-

guage', the 'frequent incompleteness of many utterances', a 'common personal background', randomness of subject-matter', 'a general lack of planning', and 'hesitation features'.

In brief, conversation may be characterized as an informal speech event which is largely guided by the spontaneous wishes and interests of the participants and may occur for no other reason than to carry out social interaction. A debate, on the other hand, is a formal speech event which is highly task-oriented and characterized by organizational efficiency.

A third way of tackling the problem would be to give examples of conversation. Typical manifestations are talks between colleagues, friends, between husband and wife or other members of the family, etc.

2.3 SPEAKING-TURNS AND BACK-CHANNEL ITEMS

In a study of turn-taking, some distinctions must be made. First, two types of utterances, speaking-turns and back-channel items, should be kept apart:

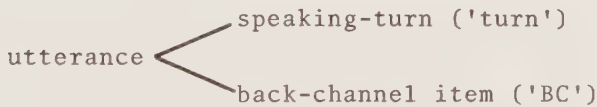


Fig. 3. Turns and back-channel items.

On the one hand, there is the turn which is, strictly speaking, the continuous period of time during which a person is talking.⁴ It is the speaker's message delivered during the same period of time. It appears that this is the basis for Fries's (1952:23) definition of an 'utterance unit': "Utterance units are thus those chunks of talk that are marked off by a shift of speaker".

A speaking-turn is a concept that conveys new information and expands the topic (Henne 1978:124). There is unanimous agreement, however, that certain brief, spontaneous reactions from the listener (termed 'back-channel items' by Yngve 1970:574) signaling continued attention, agreement, and various emotional reactions are not to be classified as turns (Kendon 1967, Yngve 1970, Duncan 1973, Duncan & Niederehe 1974, Wiemann & Knapp 1975, Henne

& Rehbock 1978:177, Harrigan 1980, and others). Examples of these listener responses are *m, mhm, yes, yeah, right, fine, OK, alright, I see, that's right*, etc. (other than answers to questions). They represent rather special functions where the listener informs the speaker that his message has been received, understood, agreed to and/or has caused a certain effect thereby supplying him with direct feedback.⁵ Such utterances are normally not, if ever, picked up and commented on by the other speaker but are still important contributions as they help to sustain the flow of interaction. Without these listener responses, the speaker would sooner or later start wondering whether he is being listened to or not, whether the communicative contact has been discontinued. To use Watzlawick et al's (1967) terms, a BC has a relatively low value on the content level but a relatively high value on the relationship level of communication. Emission merely of exponents of these listener responses is not to be considered to be an act of turn-taking but rather the opposite; they confirm that the person is still assuming the listening-mode without an intention to take the floor.⁶ While a turn would imply 'I talk, you listen', a BC would mean the opposite, 'I listen, you talk'.

Second, interpersonal communication presupposes that one participant is in the speaking-mode and the other(s) in the listening-mode. According to Kendon (1967), a speaker is a participant in a conversation who claims the turn at any given moment and a listener is a participant who does not. A speaker is chiefly engaged in speaking but is also attentive to the listener's reactions. A listener is chiefly engaged in listening but supplies the speaker intermittently with feedback signals, verbally or non-verbally. Accordingly, the interactants are simultaneously engaged both in speaking and in listening but only one of them, as a rule, has the turn.⁷

Henne (1978:124) has summed up the discussion of speaker and listener:

Aufgabe des Sprechers ist es, das Gespräch zu führen, d.h. aktiv durch sprachliche Aktionen auf- und abzubauen durch Bestimmung der Beziehungsstrukturen und Entwicklung der thematischen und Verlaufsaspekte des Gesprächs. Aufgabe des Hörers ist es, die Führung des Gesprächs aktiv durch sprachliche und nichtsprachliche

Re-Aktionen, eben durch Rückmeldungsverhalten, zu begleiten und damit zu kontrollieren.

The speaker and listener thus have different roles to fulfil in conversation. The speaker's role is concerned with action, foreground activity, advancing the topic, and with delivering turns whereas the listener's role is concerned with reaction, background activity, and with emitting BCs. It is part of the listener role to express appropriate reactions to the speaker's message in order to show that he is an active listener and an interested partner. The speaker-shift process, ie the decision whether to assume the speaker role or the listener role, presupposes active regulation of the roles by the participants themselves. A requirement for constructive interaction is that they adhere to the roles they are assuming at the moment. Active maintenance of the roles and rules helps to avoid a short circuit in the conversation. It is largely the alternation of these roles that is implied in the exchange of turns.

The following example of a conversation between two participants, A and B, will serve as an illustration of turns, BCs, and turn-taking:

- | | | | |
|-----|----|---|--------------|
| (1) | A | <i>did you see Sam the other day</i> | (Turn 1) |
| | ↙B | <i>yes</i> | (Turn 2) |
| | ↙A | <i>I think he is rather happy with the new system
of organization</i> | (Turn 3) |
| | B | <i>m</i> | (BC) |
| | A | <i>but he was against it a couple of months ago</i> | (Turn 3 ctd) |
| | ↙B | <i>I think this was because of you know a general
feeling of distrust</i> | (Turn 4) |

In the example, Speaker A has two utterances both of which are turns. Speaker B has three utterances but his second one is a BC and the other two are turns. This means that there are three instances of turn-taking, here indicated with arrows.

2.4 THE TURN-TAKING PROCESS

The change of speaker was earlier said to be a basic factor of the sequential organization of conversation. Attention has been paid to how conversation is sequentially ordered and rule-governed, for example, openings of telephone conversations (Schegloff 1968), side sequences (Jefferson 1972), closings of conversations (Schegloff & Sacks 1973 and Jefferson 1973), and others.

One basic rule in this respect towards which the participants orient themselves is 'one party at a time' (Schegloff 1968:1076). Schegloff & Sacks (1973:293f) support this claim by arguing that violations of this rule will be 'noticed events' for the conversationalists and that repair mechanisms will handle these violations. The rule has a double effect. First, when two or more people find that they are talking simultaneously, all of them, or all except one, generally stop after only a short while. Second, when there is silence, someone tends to begin to speak as a reaction to this silence. Here, the rule receives the meaning 'at least one speaker at a time'.

Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974) have presented a general system for turn-taking in conversation. The disciplinary motivation for their work is sociological. Their system is context-free in the sense that the formal analytical apparatus works independently of context and is therefore applicable to other speech-exchange systems besides conversation. By 'context-free' is meant that the turn-taking mechanism is independent of the various social contexts but it does not mean, of course, that it cannot be locally context-sensitive, ie the internal structure of a turn may contain different sorts of trigger elements. This is obviously what they mean by 'capable of extraordinary context-sensitivity' (p. 699). Sacks et al's model is based on a number of 'observable facts' (p. 700f):

- 1 Speaker-change recurs, or at least occurs.
- 2 Overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time.
- 3 Occurrences of more than one speaker at a time are common, but brief.

- 4 Transitions (from one turn to a next) with no gap and no overlap are common. Together with transitions characterized by slight gap or slight overlap, they make up the vast majority of transitions.
- 5 Turn order is not fixed, but varies.
- 6 Turn size is not fixed, but varies.
- 7 Length of conversation is not specified in advance.
- 8 What parties say is not specified in advance.
- 9 Relative distribution of turns is not specified in advance.
- 10 Number of parties can vary.
- 11 Talk can be continuous or discontinuous.
- 12 Turn-allocation techniques are obviously used. A current speaker may select a next speaker (as when he addresses a question to another party); or parties may self-select in starting to talk.
- 13 Various 'turn-constructional units' are employed; eg turns can be projectedly 'one word long', or they can be sentential in length.
- 14 Repair mechanisms exist for dealing with turn-taking errors and violations; eg if two parties find themselves talking at the same time, one of them will stop prematurely, thus repairing the trouble.

From their general observations, they conclude that there exist a number of ordered rules that can be summed up as follows:

- A Turn-transfer occurs at a 'transition-relevance place'.
- B First starter gets the turn.
- C If 'current-speaker-selects-next technique' is used, the next speaker selected gets the turn.
- D If 'current-speaker-selects-next technique' is not used, the floor is free at a transition-relevance place.

Sacks et al argue that "all turn-transfer is coördinated around transition-relevance places, which are themselves determined by possible completion points" (p. 706). They state that 'syntax' is the crucial factor for establishing a transition-relevance place (henceforth abbreviated TRP). A TRP is regarded as the possible completion of a sentential, clausal, phrasal, or lexical construction: "Sentential constructions are capable of being analysed in the course of their production by a party/hearer able to use such analyses to project their possible completion loci" (p. 709).

As turn-order is not fixed but is taken care of locally as the conversation proceeds, self-selection is one technique for allocating turns. The principle here is 'first come, first served' (Goffman 1972:59). Another technique is when the current speaker (ie the person who is currently holding the turn) selects the next speaker. A current speaker can select the next speaker by nominating him, directing a question to him, etc. If this latter technique is used, the selected speaker has the floor at the next TRP. If it is not employed, there is a choice: the current speaker may, but need not, self-select. If no one selects him-self, there will be silence. But since silence is counter to the rule of at least one at a time, someone is likely to start talking as a reaction to this silence. The rules of turn-taking will then re-apply at the next TRP (Fig. 4):

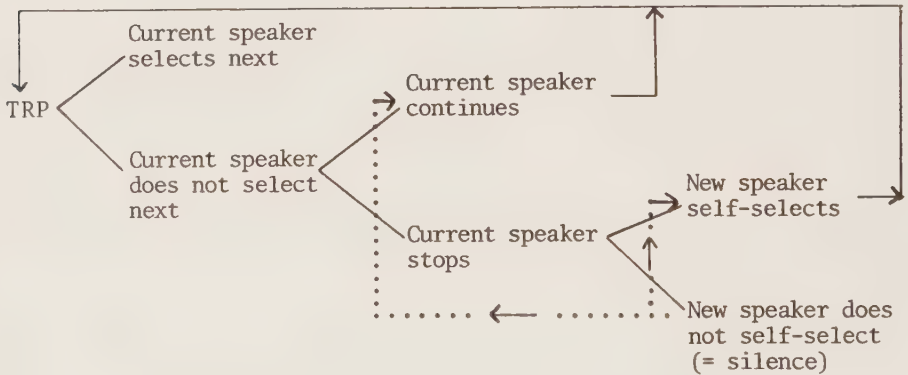


Fig. 4. Turn-taking; dotted lines indicate the tendency for recycling strategies when silence arises.

To exemplify the rules, the turn-taking procedure can be applied to the sequence of a three-party conversation between speakers A, B, and C in Fig. 5:⁸

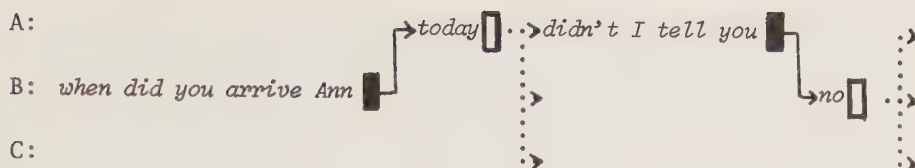


Fig. 5. Turn-taking; filled bar = TRP, 'current-speaker-selects-next technique' is used, unfilled bar = TRP, the floor is free, solid line = obligatory continuation, dotted line = optional continuation.

In the example in Fig. 5, the nomination by speaker B of 'Ann' (Speaker A) calls upon her to speak and serves as next speaker selection and it is only relevant for her to speak next: "a person who is asked a question takes precedence over others in speaking next in order to answer the question" (Speier 1973:97).

Sacks et al's systematics for turn-taking, which accounts for general basic organization principles, is a valuable achievement as it contributes to the understanding of how conversation is systematically ordered. Although their model is a great step towards such an understanding, it has obvious limitations. All speaking-turns are given the same status; little attention is paid to the internal structure of the turns and how the interactants design their turns to make them compatible with the rules, and to the complex nature of a TRP.

2.5 THE TURN SIGNALS

How does the listener know when it is his turn to speak and how do the participants go about regulating their talk to promote smooth alternations of speaker and listener roles into well-synchronized exchanges?

A potential speaker is faced with the task of searching in the current speaker's flow of talk in order to find points where a smooth transition can take place. The rate of speech in ordinary conversation is often high, several words per second, and it requires active listening both to decide where an ongoing turn is terminated or can possibly be terminated and to come in with precision and produce a relevant next turn. Jefferson (1973) shows

that the listener has the "technical capacity to produce his talk with precision in relation to that ongoing talk" (p. 49) and to "select a precise spot to start his own talk 'no later' than the exact appropriate moment to place it so that it will sound like a 'continuation' of the prior/ongoing talk" (p. 51).

The fact that the interactants do not constantly collide but manage to carry out their task can chiefly be ascribed to two factors:

- The listener analyses the ongoing speech and makes inferences from the constraints that the gradual narrowing down of choices yields, and makes use of this information for setting up a 'running hypothesis' (Kendon 1970:122) about the speaker's intended message.
- The speaker puts out signals, verbal or non-verbal, intentionally or unintentionally, which further punctuate his completions and guide the listener in his search for points where it is relevant to take over (TRPs).

It is the combination of these two factors, the listener's interpretation enabling anticipation of the intended message, and the speaker's signals that makes it possible to enter with precision and recurrently execute well-timed instances of turn-taking.

The features that are employed as signals by the speaker in the turn-taking process, thereby enabling a smooth regulation of talk, have been studied by, in particular, Duncan (eg 1970, 1972, 1973). According to Duncan (1972), whose work is based on two videotaped psychiatric interviews, there exists a 'turn-taking mechanism' with the help of which "the turn need not be disputed in the course of the conversation" (p. 286). This mechanism works counter to simultaneous turns where it "may be said to have broken down, or perhaps to have been discarded". Simultaneous turns is a concept which means that more than one person wants to have the turn. In a dialogue between two people, A and B, there are four possible alternatives as regards the speaker and listener roles at any given moment:

A is speaker, B is listener
 B is speaker, A is listener
 both A and B are speakers (= simultaneous turns)
 both A and B are listeners

Duncan (1972 and 1973) maintains that there are four basic types of signals for the operation of the turn-taking mechanism:

- a) turn-yielding signal; the speaker indicates that he intends to terminate his turn
- b) attempt-suppressing signal; the speaker indicates that he intends to hold the turn
- c) turn-claiming signal; the listener indicates that he intends to take the turn
- d) back-channel item; the listener indicates that he does not intend to take the turn

A proper operation of the turn-taking mechanism would be as follows:

- the current speaker emits a turn-yielding signal
- the listener claims the speaking-turn
- the current speaker gives up his turn

A case in which the speaker signals that he is finishing and the listener begins as a response to that initiative is regarded as a successful exchange.

Duncan (1972) found that the turn signal is composed of a set of six specific and discrete cues displayed singly or in combination. He observed that a speaker who is ready to give up his turn can signal this by means of:

- 1 Intonation: the use of any pitch level-terminal junction combination other than 22|, ie by using a non-level tone at the end of a phonemic clause
- 2 Paralanguage: Drawl: drawl on the final syllable or on the stressed syllable of a terminal clause

- 3 Body motion: the termination of any hand gesticulation or the relaxation of a tensed hand position
- 4 Sociocentric sequences: the appearance of one of several stereotyped expressions, such as *but uh, or something, you know*
- 5 Paralanguage: Pitch/loudness: a drop in paralinguistic pitch and/or loudness in conjunction with one of the sociocentric sequences
- 6 Syntax: the completion of a grammatical clause, involving a subject-predicate combination.

Duncan notes that "The chance of simultaneous turns was sharply decreased when the auditor attempted to take his turn after the display of a yielding signal by the speaker. As more yielding cues were conjointly displayed, the probability of a turn-taking attempt by the auditor increased in a strictly linear fashion" (p. 290).

The listed cues in combination would constitute TRPs in the speaker's flow of talk. The listener can never be fully certain, upon the display of these cues, that the speaker will actually terminate his turn. He may want to continue and the cues are therefore not necessarily signals of turn-yielding. But what the listener will know is that the speaker has reached a point of *possible completion* and it is towards these possible completions that the listener orients himself when he wants to take over the speaker role.

Although being a serious attempt at describing how the end of a turn is indicated by the speaker, Duncan's work is not without problems. All six cues are given the same value, ie they are seen as equally powerful as turn-yielding signals. This, however, is not examined nor are the various combinations of the cues accounted for. We therefore do not know whether any individual cue was more central than the others. Further, his analytic system is based on the phonemic clause (Trager & Smith 1957) and involves the difficulties of drawing a sharp line between prosodic and paralinguistic categories (see Crystal & Quirk 1964:12). In addition, the linguistic categories have to be further examined.⁹

One example is that a TRP, syntactically, does not always have to be a completed grammatical clause with a subject-predicate combination (see Fig. 5).

Let us look closer at some linguistic factors that are used as signals in the turn-taking process. Schegloff & Sacks (1973: 295ff) discuss 'adjacency pairs', a term they use for certain turns that are closely related. An adjacency pair is made up of two turns uttered by different speakers where the first part of the pair combines with a second to form a pair. The production of the first part serves as a strong demand for the production of the second part. Examples are question/answer, greeting/greeting, summons/answer, etc. The first part of the pair involves a turn-yielding and a response-seeking element:

- (2) A *what is the purpose of your trip*
 B *I am going to visit my brother*

Good (1977:22) points out that the adjacency pairs are general structures that belong to 'conversational competence'. The putting of a question normally requires the production of an answer, a greeting requires a matching greeting, etc. These are assumptions built into conversation (Lakoff 1972:916).

Shields (1976:452) argues that "Single word answers such as *yes* and *no* and ellipses appear to be grounded in powerful social rules which decree turntaking". Good (1977:23, 29) suggests that *yes* and variants as well as degrees of casualness are linguistic signals of finality which may indicate permission for another participant to enter the conversation.

In general, a question is followed by some kind of response. In terms of turn-taking, we could say that a terminated stretch in the interrogative mood is at the same time a turn-yielding and a response-seeking signal and 'turn-inviting' signal could be used to account for this dual nature of a question.

A complication is posed by *you know*, *you see*, tag questions, and a few other expressions which are sometimes used as turn-yielders sometimes have only a 'filler' function serving as intimacy signals and are therefore not reacted to by the listener. Besides, *you know*, *you see* and especially tag questions followed by a brief response expressing confirmation (*yes* and variants)

are borderline cases. Whether such a relation should be classified as turn-taking is surely a matter of definition. It depends on whether the confirmation is to be seen as a speaking-turn or a BC. Although *you know* and *you see* are used so often by some people as to be not far from a 'verbal tic' (Dittmann & Llewellyn 1968:84), they still seem to have a potential use of passing the turn.

Another relatively common way of finishing the turn is by using the word *still*.

A silent pause after a grammatically complete utterance, an 'informative pause' (Jefferson 1973:73), is a further marker of completion. Jaffe, Feldstein & Cassotta (1967:281) note that there is generally an intervening pause at the switching point and propose that it serves as an 'end of message' signal and label it 'switching pause'. Jaffe & Feldstein (1970:79) point out that the longer the silence is, the more likely it is that speaker-switch will take place. Long pauses and silence are in themselves a cue for the participants to start talking according to the rule of at least one speaker at a time. Talk is often a means of getting rid of an embarrassing silence and the prevention of silence is therefore an end in itself. Goffman (1976:282) claims that in conversation there is an eagerness to 'keep the fire burning': "once the exchange of words has brought individuals into a jointly sustained and ratified focus of attention, once, that is, a fire has been built, any visible thing (just as any spoken referent) can be burnt in it". Trudgill (1974:13) mentions that "If no conversation takes place the atmosphere can become rather strained". Phatic communion can solve this problem as its chief purpose is not to transmit information but "to get over the strange and unpleasant tension which men feel when facing each other in silence" (Malinowski 1969:314). It happens therefore that they try to coax the partner into taking a turn when there is a longer pause in the conversation. Talk, often in the form of 'small talk', would appear to be a guarantee against lurking silence. Bernard (1972:161) refers to this kind of conventional small talk as a kind of 'pseudocommunication'.

As regards the signals that a speaker uses when he intends to hold the turn, Sorhus (1977:213f) in her study of 'frozen expressions' groups her data into four categories, two of which act as turn-holding signals:

- (3) *Now from a practical point of view, ...* ('Stalls')
 (4) *Can you imagine ...* ('Bids')

In line with her examples would be the employment of items like *on the one hand, first*, etc. or the starting with a subordinate clause, which highlights non-completion and hence that another element is needed for making it complete.

Maclay & Osgood (1959:41) hypothesize that 'filled pauses', [ə:] and variants, are indicators from the speaker that he has not terminated but is still engaged in planning. Using filled pauses is one way of keeping control of the 'conversational ball' while organizing his thoughts. Ball (1975) and Beattie (1977) argue in the same direction.

Silent pauses can also be used as a deliberate technique to indicate non-completion and thereby also turn-holding. As silent pauses are 'potentially traps' (Baird 1968:133f), a speaker can place his pauses within, rather than at the end of, syntactic entities in an attempt to avoid being interrupted:

- (5) *I think - I know who - told me about - what happened*

Finally, face-to-face interaction is certainly not solely a linguistic matter. Conversation is a two-way process in which the interactants are also constantly picking up clues from each other's non-linguistic behaviour. They 'negotiate' in various ways to have their intentions realized, for example, whether they want to take the speaker or the listener role. This negotiation is carried out, in addition, by means of kinesic (non-verbal) behaviour. Kinesics was introduced as a term by Birdwhistell (1952) to represent body language, such as movements, gestures, and facial expressions that are concomitants of speech. The kinesic behaviour of both speaker and listener in conversation is considerable having a large number of different manifestations and meanings.

Kinesic acts convey meaning and are therefore important contributors to communication. The non-verbal signals passing back and forth as the conversation goes along have been found to have manifold functions (eg Nielsen 1964:77 et passim and Argyle 1975). One of these functions is to synchronize the linguistic inter-

action, to regulate talk. This regulatory function is particularly performed by eye glances.

Exline (1963) observed that participants in conversation look more at their partners while listening than while talking. Kendon (1967), who analysed beginnings and endings of utterances in brief conversations, proposes that one important factor facilitating the smooth speaker-shift is gaze. He found a relationship between frequency of gaze direction towards interlocutors and the beginnings and ends of turns. Kendon therefore suggests that the speaker when finishing talking and looking up, is expecting a response. He also reports that the frequency of a delayed response and no response is greater when the speaker finishes talking without looking up. Dittmann & Llewellyn (1968) found that what they call 'listener's vocalizations' (*m*, *mhm*, *I see*, etc.) and nods tend to occur together and also that this joint response, often in combination with a brief smile and a change of gaze direction, showed correlation with speaker-shift. They conclude that this combination has a potential as a marker of units in social interaction, ie to signal that the listener now wants to speak. Kinesic signals other than eye glances have been found to have little or no value as regards turn-taking. Duncan (1972) argues that a speaker's gesticulation signal appears to cancel a listener's turn-claiming signal and that the cessation of a gesture may operate as one indicator of turn-yielding. Poyatos (1976) seems to believe that the kinesic behaviour is so complex that it has to be studied as a whole.

There is, in effect, considerable disagreement about the role of kinesic behaviour in the regulation of turn-taking in conversation (see Beattie 1981a for an account of the various studies in this field).

Notes

- 1 Cf Goffman's (1955:226) statement that "In any society, whenever the physical possibility of spoken interaction arises, it seems that a system of practises, conventions, and procedural rules comes into play which functions as a means of guiding and organizing the flow of messages."
- 2 Turn-taking is not a uniquely linguistic phenomenon. Goffman (1972:40, footnote) gives an example from a traffic situation how cars from both lanes of a two-lane road take turns, or 'interweave', when solving the problem of continuing at a sudden narrowing of the road into one-lane traffic.
- 3 In our western culture, we have no formal system regulating who speaks when in adult conversation. It is common among adults when talking to children to give higher priority to their own contributions and let the child wait his turn. But Albert (1972:81) reports on the existence of such a formal system of speaking-order in Burundi where the order in which individuals speak is strictly determined by seniority and social rank. The system has the pattern ABCD...n, ABCD...n, etc. where it is closely regulated beforehand who speaks after whom in any such round of talk. A foreigner confronted with this speech community and wanting to participate will find his own communicative competence insufficient without the relevant cultural competence:

to communicate appropriately with the members of an unfamiliar society it is not enough that he learn to formulate messages intelligibly. Something else is needed: a knowledge of what kinds of codes, channels and expressions to use, in what kinds of situations, to what kinds of people (Basso 1972:69)
- 4 Cf Markel (1975:190) who uses 'talking' here in the sense of 'solo talking'.
- 5 The notion of 'direct feedback' in face-to-face communication is an important one and different from 'indirect feedback' in mass communication where it is manifested as letters to the editor, number of issues sold, etc.
- 6 Whether 'having the turn' is to be equated with 'having the floor' is an open question and will not be further discussed here. For an interesting account of this complicated problem, see Edelsky (1981).
- 7 Hasan (1978:232f) discusses the different participant roles: "every interactant in a verbal interaction carries at least three distinct types of roles simultaneously". These roles are:
 - 1 Textual roles; those interchangeable ones of speaker and hearer. "The notion of turn taking ... is again closely related to the textual roles of speaker and hearer and the possibility of 'textual role-switch'."

- 2 Social roles; generally non-interchangeable roles within the same interaction. They can be hierarchical or non-hierarchical.
- 3 Participatory roles; those of initiator and respondent which refer to who sets the interaction into motion and who responds to the initiator's move.
- 8 The role of intonation in relation to a TRP will be discussed in Chapter 4 as well as factors like speed and loudness.
- 9 Duncan's cues that concern intonation and paralanguage have recently been criticized by Cutler & Pearson (in press) who not only question their signal function but also call them 'extremely ill-defined'.

3 Aim and material

The aim of this study is to examine some aspects related to the speaker-shift process in conversation. These aspects are a) the relation between 'turn-yielding', transition-relevance places, and linguistic properties b) length of a speaker's turns, c) the listener's activity, and d) simultaneous speech and interruption. The data will be related to extra-linguistic speaker factors, sex and age, and also to the manner of recording.

Since 1960, the Survey of English Usage (SEU) in London has collected spoken and written present-day educated British English. The corpus of spoken English, now totalling some 90 'texts' each of about 5000 words, covers a number of different situations in which spoken language is used, ranging from casual, informal conversation between intimates to prepared, formal oration in front of an unknown audience. The text groups of the corpus will be seen in Table 1. The samples were recorded on audio tape, analysed auditorily, and transcribed orthographically on paper slips. The corpus was analysed for prosody and paralinguistics at the SEU with the 'tone unit' as the basic analytic entity. The system of analysis is presented in Crystal & Quirk (1964) and in Crystal (1969). It is no exaggeration to say that the corpus is unique for its size and variety of speech events in combination with a rich supply of prosodic and paralinguistic notation.

The sociological (individual-specific) background data about the participants are limited to sex, age, education and/or profession. As regards the social (relation-specific) data, information about the relationship between the speakers (eg husband and wife, close friends, etc.) is sometimes given, sometimes not. This means that the personal relationship between them (intimate or distant) and relative status (equal or non-equal) must often be understood from the actual conversation. Personal relation-

TEXT GROUPS		Subgroups	Dialogue Face-to-face Private Surreptitious Radio					SUB- GROUP TOTAL	TEXT GROUP TOTAL
ABBRE- VIATION	BROAD DESCRIPTION								
CON	Face-to-face conversation	A B	+	+	+	+	-	34 12	46
TEL	Telephone conversation	C	+	-	+	+	-	10	10
DIS	Discussion, debate interview, debate	D	+	+	-	-	+	12	12
PUB	Public, unpre- pared commentary demonstration, oration	E	+	+	-	-	-	3	12
		F	-	+	-	-	+	2	
		G	-	-	-	-	+	7	
PRE	Public, prepared oration	H	-	+	-	-	-	7	7
(From Svartvik et al 1982)		Number of "+" texts:							
		71 70 56 44 21					87		87

Table 1. The text groups of the London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English.

ship, based on acquaintanceship, and relative status and social rank between them, based on profession, could be illustrated with the example in Fig. 6:

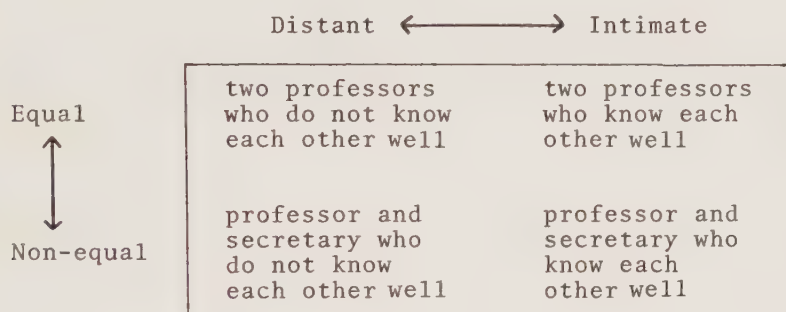


Fig 6. Schematic presentation of social and personal relationships between the individuals.

However, the corpus does not provide us with data accounting for prior relations between the individuals, for example, how closely they are acquainted and for how long they have known each other. This lack of information makes statements about the distant/intimate factor problematic. The fact that two people work at the same place does not, even if they talk to each other every day, indicate anything about their real personal relations. Therefore 'intimate' and 'distant' in Fig. 6 means 'know' and 'not know', respectively, and says nothing about the degree of intimacy, about the true nature of personal relations. But relative status and personal relations between the speakers will not be further discussed in this study, not even with the given reservations, owing to the fact that such relations could not be firmly and consistently established in the conversations in this material.

Working with tape-recorded conversations a long time after they were recorded, without having attended the actual recordings and not knowing the participants is naturally a problem for anyone who wants to make an interactional study of conversation. Much of what takes place in the actual conversational situation is of a transient here-and-now character and will therefore not appear on the tape. The interactants' choice of expressive means, their shared knowledge and experience of each other's communica-

tive behaviour, and their real relation to the topic are only partly accessible to observation. Utterances that seem to be neutral information to the analyst may, to the participants, be loaded with additional attitudinal information, such as expressions of surprise, irony, and irritation. The speakers express themselves in the way they find suitable for their particular purpose. An understatement may well serve an emphatic purpose and merely mentioning somebody's name may be enough to have a certain effect. There are a number of instances whose real meaning we can only guess at. This means that full insight into the linguistic and non-linguistic activities cannot be gained from the corpus.

What has been said above points to some methodological issues involved in collecting a corpus of spoken language. Since the study of the language of conversation is ultimately the study of interpersonal communication, a rich supply of various data is needed for a fruitful analysis. Otherwise we will only be able to analyse what we think is going on, not what is really going on.

In 1975, the Survey of Spoken English (SSE) at Lund started transferring the corpus from the original paper slips to magnetic computer tape. Part of the London-Lund Corpus (LLC), 34 surreptitiously recorded face-to-face conversations, are published in book form (Svartvik & Quirk 1980, which also includes a description of the whole corpus).

The London-Lund Corpus comprises samples that represent monologues, dialogues, and polylogues, recorded surreptitiously or non-surreptitiously, produced in face-to-face or telephone exchanges and in various situations.

For several reasons, my original plan was to study the surreptitious face-to-face dyadic (two-person) conversations. Everyday conversation between friends, colleagues, and members of the family is by far the most common use of language. It is a daily engagement whereas we are more seldom involved in speech events like, for example, a debate or an interview. The paradox here is that it is at the same time the least investigated:

But what in fact linguistics has concerned itself with, up to now, has almost exclusively been - spoken prose ... Genuine spoken language, or 'conversation' in my sense of the term, has hardly been described at all in any language
(Abercrombie 1963:12, 16)

There are many reasons for this; in particular, the practical problems that are connected with recording. Labov (1971:171) points to another reason, the observer's paradox when collecting data:

the aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed; yet we can only obtain this data by systematic observation

In order to capture 'casual, vernacular speech', ie when the minimum attention is given to the monitoring of speech (as defined by Labov 1971:170), factors in the actual recording situation which may effect the speakers' natural way of talking should ideally be eliminated. Duncan & Fiske (1977:25) stress the demand for natural setting:

the goal is to minimize, within the constraints of research requirements and ethics, intrusion upon the interaction in question

The safest technique for collecting such data as are mentioned above would then be surreptitious recordings. The great importance of this technique has been pointed out by, among others, Quirk (1955), Abercrombie (1963), Crystal & Davy (1969:96). The latter even maintain that it is the "only safe way of obtaining data", although they also argue that, when there is an open microphone, the participants, after a while, generally forget that they are being recorded. On the other hand, they admit that this occurs cyclically, ie the speakers become aware of it now and again during the conversation. However, we cannot know exactly where and when they are unconscious of observation. Also, even if an open microphone may not always make the speakers monitor and drastically change their vocabulary, phonology, or syntax, depending on who is participating, we have no right to assume that it may not have an effect on their interactional behaviour, not even if they are instructed to behave naturally. Asking people to start communicating and to behave naturally amounts to a 'be spontaneous paradox' (Watzlawick et al 1967:237). People consequently behave differently in front of a microphone. Some will perform as they do normally whereas others will become more

cautious, being aware that what they say and how they say it is observed, recorded, and will later be subjected to close investigation. Speakers' varying ways of facing such a situation can therefore be assumed to have consequences for their communicative behaviour. Those who master it may take up a greater part of the total talking-time and emerge as active and talkative while those who do not master it may make fewer contributions and emerge as comparatively passive and taciturn. This is important to have in mind, because *"if you cannot manage the role, you can't produce the appropriate speech"* (Bernstein 1974:177).

A final point about non-surreptitious recordings is that there is the risk that the participants will start 'collaborating' with the recorder, attempting to 'do their best'. This means that the monitoring process is switched on, and that they begin to orient themselves towards conventions that they would not have followed if the tape-recorder had not been there. Such a normative orientation and interactional 'make-up', having a direct effect on spontaneity, may involve, for example, increased attention to the turn-taking process, resulting in fewer instances of interruption. To sum up, a speaker's linguistic code may not differ greatly between the two manners of recording situations, but his code of conduct may well do so.

A further reason for preferring dyads is that they are, presumably, the most common constellations of conversation. Another thing is that studies in social psychology, focussing on behaviour in small groups, have shown that the size of group influences the participants' 'interaction profile' (Stephan & Mishler 1952 and Bales & Borgatta 1965).

However, there are only 4 surreptitious face-to-face dyads in the LLC. The material was therefore extended to include also 6 non-surreptitious ones in order to see whether the manner of recording was influential. Consequently, the 10 samples that make up the material of this study are all taken from text group CON in Table 1 and have the following characteristics (see also Table 2 for a description of the material and Appendix II for information about the speakers):

- Type of interaction: conversation
- Manner of recording: 4 surreptitious (Group I)
6 non-surreptitious (Group II)
- Type of channel: face-to-face
- Number of participants in each sample: two (dyadic)

In many of the surreptitiously recorded conversations in the LLC, one or more so-called 'non-surreptitious speakers' can be found. These speakers are aware of the presence of the microphone and their role is to keep the conversation going. Since these speakers act as prompters, ie they fulfil a certain deliberate role in the recording procedure and hence do not act wholly spontaneously, and since their contributions to the conversation have not been analysed as regards prosody and paralanguage at the London Survey, no such conversations are used here.

The present study is based on the original SEU transcriptions on paper slips being the more detailed version containing all the analytic notation of prosody and paralanguage. In the examples given from the LLC, the references are to the slips in the text (eg S.1.1; 39 means text/conversation S.1.1 slip 39). For ease of readability, all examples have been re-typed here and sometimes also supplied with TU numbers from the SSE computer printout version of the corpus. For reasons of economy, prosodic and paralinguistic notation in the examples is, as a rule, limited to that retained in the book version of the corpus. The audio tapes lodged in the files of the SEU in London have also been consulted on several occasions.

Conversation	No of TUs	Length in mins	Surrep- titious	Male- Male	Male- Female	Female- Female	Age difference more than 10 years
Group I	S.1.1	1211	32 1/2	+	-	-	+
	S.1.2:1	885	18	+	-	-	-
	S.1.4	1226	22 1/2	+	-	-	-
	S.1.6	1235	32 1/2	+	+	-	+
	S.4.1	1099	31	-	+	-	-
	S.4.2	1247	32 1/2	-	+	-	+
Group II	S.5.8	955	28 1/2	-	-	+	-
	S.5.9	1247	29 1/2	-	+	-	-
	S.5.10	1054	24	+	-	-	-
	S.6.2	1048	24 1/2	-	+	-	+

Table 2. Description of the material.

4 Turn-yielding signals

4.1 METHOD

In this chapter, the relation between the linguistic features in the LLC and end of speaking-turns will be studied for four of the conversations in the material (S.1.1, S.1.4, S.1.6, and S.4.1).

As was said in Chapter 3, the prosodic analytic entity in the LLC is the tone unit (henceforth TU). This concept will be retained here, constituting a basic formal unit of analysis also in this study. Moreover, it is hypothesized that end of turn is positively correlated with end of TU, which is a point of prosodic completion. A complete TU is a sequence which is characterized by, as it were, 'tonal cohesion' and is independent of a neighbouring sequence.¹ It has, obligatorily, one nucleus type (kinetic tone) and one onset (first prominent syllable of the TU) and, optionally, one or more stressed and/or pitch-prominent but non-nuclear syllables. Crystal (1969:207ff) discusses the internal structure of the TU, which, maximally, consists of four segments: Prehead (= pre-onset stretch), Head (= from the onset up to, but not including, the nuclear tone), Nucleus, and Tail (= post-nuclear stretch). Minimally, it consists of a Nucleus, all other segments being optional. For the identification of the TU, see Crystal (1969:204ff).

The LLC samples contain a large amount of prosodic and paralinguistic notation and the immediate problem was to decide how much of all the available data in the SEU transcriptions that ought to be included in this study. Inspection of the material soon proved that, because of the abundance of prosodic and paralinguistic data, this study had to be limited to those features which occurred with reasonable frequency in the vicinity of a turn-taking locus, ie among the last three and following first three TUs next to that locus.

The coded factors

This study of turn-yielding signals focusses on the 'linguistic situation' prevailing when a new speaker entered and took his turn. It excludes the back-channel items. For every speaking-turn in the four conversations, the first three and last three TUs were coded as regards a number of factors. The coding of all these factors was divided into 28 columns with one factor in every column. The page references in this chapter are to Crystal (1969) if not otherwise stated. An extract of a conversation and its coded version are to be seen in Fig. 8 and Table 3 (p. 59f). For signs and symbols, see Appendix I.

- col. 1: Speaker identity; two speakers, A and B, in each dyad.
- cols. 2-5: TU number; the numbering is identical with that in the book version and in the computer printout version of the corpus.
- col. 6: Quality of TU; some of the TUs contain a substantial number of words which are obscure on the audio tapes (indicated with double brackets). Such TUs have here been coded as '1'.
- col. 7: Type of TU; here it is indicated whether a TU also contains one or (much less often) more subordinate TUs or not. "The theory of subordination has been set up to account for one set of frequently occurring external relationships in terms of the pitch movement of tone-units immediately in sequence ... subordination is recognized and defined solely on prosodic grounds" (p. 244). Two criteria are used to determine a subordinate TU (p. 245):
- the nuclear tone type must repeat the direction of the nucleus in the superordinate TU
 - the width of nuclear movement in the superordinate TU must be greater than that in the subordinate TU.
- A TU that contains a subordinate TU is coded as '2', otherwise as '1'. Examples of subordinate TUs:
- (6) A *ex/aminers . " !bunch their márks . {/on 81 . éssay#} {(and)) /comprehénsion#}#* (S.1.1; 70)
- col. 8: Nucleus; the most prominent syllable in a TU and the syllable that carries the kinetic tone, ie direction of pitch movement. "The presence of a nucleus is what accounts for our intuition of 'completeness' at the end of the unit: if it is omitted, the auditory effect is one of being 'cut short' " (p. 207). The nucleus is an obligatory element in a complete TU and the following types of nucleus are distinguished (p. 213ff):

Simple:	Complex:	Compound:
` fall	v fall-rise	`+' fall-plus-rise
˘ rise	^ rise-fall	˘+˘ rise-plus-fall
- level	∨ rise-fall-rise	v+˘ fall-rise-plus-fall
	∧ fall-rise-fall	∧+˘ rise-fall-plus-rise

Among the complex nuclei, ∨ and ∧ were found to be very rare, only one or two instances per conversation, and they were therefore conflated with v and ^, respectively (the same procedure that was adopted in the SSE version of the corpus). In addition, among the compound nuclei, v+˘ and ∧+˘ which were also relatively few, about 5 instances per conversation at an estimate, were likewise conflated with ˘+˘ and ˘+˘, respectively. The nuclei were consequently coded as follows:²

1 ˘	3 ˘	5 ^	7 ˘+˘
2 ˘	4 v	6 ˘+˘	8 TU contains no nucleus

col. 9:³ Pitch level (monosyllabic); this refers to the fact that nuclear tones can start on different levels (p. 148f, 213, 228). Three such levels, or 'beginning-points', are distinguished:

- 1 high
- medium (unmarked)
- 2 low

Relative pitch level can be seen as points on a vertical axis.

col. 10: Pitch width (monosyllabic); this refers to the width of the nuclear tone, the distance between its end points, and it has three such lengths (p. 213):

- 1 wide
- normal (unmarked)⁴
- 2 narrow

Relative pitch width can be seen as distances on a horizontal axis. The relation between pitch level and pitch width could be illustrated with the help of the word *yes* uttered with a fall nucleus but with different nuclear pitch ranges:

					high +	low +
∅	wide	narrow	high	low	wide	narrow
˘	˘	˘	˘	˘	˘	˘
<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>

col. 11: Stress; a nucleus contains single stress and is therefore unmarked for that. Consequently, only strong stress on a nuclear syllable is relevant here (p. 158).

col. 12: Step-ups in pitch; this system accounts for the relation between a stressed syllable and a previous one. Four types can be singled out (p. 145):

- 1 continuance; pitch remains on the same level as preceding syllable
- 2 booster; pitch is higher than preceding syllable
- 3 high booster; pitch is higher than preceding pitch-prominent step-up syllable
- 4 extra high booster; pitch is very much higher than preceding pitch-prominent step-up syllable.

- col. 13: Final word of TU; here it is indicated whether a final word of a TU carries continuance.
- col. 14: Onset; the onset is the first prominent syllable of a TU and is, like the nucleus, an obligatory element in a complete TU (p. 143). One onset per TU is the normal case and departures from this norm have been marked:
- 1 contains no onset
 - 2 contains more than one onset
- col. 15: End of TU; here it is indicated whether the TU is transcribed as complete or incomplete when turn-taking takes place. (Criteria for a complete TU, see p. 204ff).
- col. 16: Tempo 1; a distinction is made between two systems of contrasts in speech rate (p. 152ff):

I Simple system

A MONOSYLLABIC CONTRASTS

drawled; syllable that is articulated less rapidly than normal and in a very lax way (the syllable is a lengthened non-phonemic segment).

This system also contains 'clipped' and 'held' meaning a more rapid or a more delayed onset of phonation, respectively, than normal. But these two features had a very low frequency in the material and were therefore not included.

B POLYSYLLABIC CONTRASTS

allegro; faster than normal
 allegrissimo; much faster than normal⁵
 lento; slower than normal
 lentissimo; much slower than normal

II Complex system

accelerando; a gradual acceleration of speed over a stretch

rallentando; a gradual deceleration of speed over a stretch

In the present study, the tempo features have been grouped together into Tempo 1 and Tempo 2 as follows:

Tempo 1; this column contains the speed variations from the polysyllabic contrasts of the simple system and also the whole complex system. These features have been grouped together here into two categories with 'faster', 'much faster', and 'acceleration' in one of them and 'slower', 'much slower', and 'deceleration' in the other. The coding of a TU not uttered in the

speaker's normal speech rate as regards the features belonging to Tempo 1 is as follows:

- 1 faster than normal
- 2 faster followed by normal
- 3 faster followed by slower
- 4 slower than normal
- 5 slower followed by normal
- 6 slower followed by faster

'1' and '4' concern the whole TU while the rest concerns internal variations.

col. 17: Tempo 2;

- 1 drawled syllable among the last few words in a TU

col. 18: Loudness; like speech rate, two kinds of polysyllabic contrasts are distinguished (p. 159ff):

I Simple system

forte; louder than normal
 fortissimo; much louder than normal
 piano; weaker than normal
 pianissimo; much weaker than normal

II Complex system

crescendo; a gradual increase of loudness over a stretch

diminuendo; a gradual decrease of loudness over a stretch

In the present study, the loudness features have been grouped together into two categories with 'louder', 'much louder', and 'gradual increase' in one and 'weaker', 'much weaker', and 'gradual decrease' in the other. The loudness features are coded in the following way:

- 1 louder than normal
- 2 louder followed by normal
- 3 louder followed by weaker
- 4 weaker than normal
- 5 weaker followed by normal
- 6 weaker followed by louder

'1' and '4' concern the whole TU while the rest concerns internal variations.

col. 19: Pitch level (polysyllabic); by this it is meant "a stretch of utterance ... articulated at a lower or higher pitch-level than normal" (p. 149). There are two contrasts, high and low, which have been coded as follows:⁶

- 1 higher than normal
- 2 higher followed by normal
- 3 lower than normal
- 4 lower followed by normal

col. 20: Pitch width (polysyllabic); by this it is meant "a stretch of utterance of unspecified length has been narrowed or widened from its norm of *pitch-range*"

(p. 150). There are two contrasts which have been coded as follows:

- 1 wider than normal
- 2 wider followed by normal
- 3 narrower than normal
- 4 narrower followed by normal

col. 21: Syntax 1 (result); segmentation of relevant entities in spontaneous speech is a well-known problem. The approach taken here was first to establish for every individual TU of those examined its syntactic status in the discourse, ie, whether or not, on the termination of the TU, and/or before the new speaker took over, a construction was built that reflected a point of syntactic completion in the context and thereby a point at which the turn might end. The situation in terms of syntactic completeness or incompleteness is described in one of these three ways:

- 1 end of a complete and independent construction
- 2 end of a possibly complete and independent construction
- 3 incomplete/dependent construction

How is then completion and incompleteness recognized and established? The analysis of syntactic completion and incompleteness is based on what, after also listening to the tape-recordings parallel to studying the transcriptions, was considered to be reasonable interpretations in the actual context.⁷ Below will be found, as examples of the syntactic analysis, a number of constructions which are complete or incomplete upon the termination of the TU/entrance of the new speaker:

- (7) A ⁸ */wēll# . ⁹ "/mây* I 'ask# ¹⁰ /what goes
 !into that paper nōw# ¹¹ be/cause I !have to
 advise# . ¹² ((a)) /couple of people who
 are !dōing ði: ə
 B ¹³ well /what you :dō# ¹⁴ /is to - - /this
 is sort of be:tween the :twō of 'us# ¹⁵
 /what *you* :dō# ¹⁶ is to /make sure that
 your 'own . !cāndidate
 A ¹⁷ */m̃#*
 B ¹⁶ is . +. + /that your . there's /something
 that your :own candidate can :hāndle# - -
¹⁸ ((I /won't))
 B ¹⁹ +((yèah#)) +
 A ¹⁸ ((be a mīnute#)) (S.1.1; 1, TUs 8-19)

9 this TU is incomplete in the sense that it contains a main clause whose verb requires a subordinate clause; ask requires an object

11 TU incomplete as advise requires an object

- 12 TU incomplete as *doing* requires an object
- 13,15 TUs incomplete as this is a wh-clause which is the subject of the main clause in TU 16
- 14 TU incomplete because this is just an inserted clause and what was begun in TU 13 is still not completed at the end of TU 14. The construction is completed in TU 16.

Note that TU 17 is not counted as a turn and therefore no turn-taking takes place here. As was said before (pp. 23f and 48), such utterances are outside this study and from the turn-taking point of view they are treated as non-existent. Types of syntactically incomplete constructions could then be grouped together. Below - and starting with the constituents S(ubject), V(erb), and C(omplementation) - such types are exemplified. Incompletion is indicated with '⇒' and followed by what is required to make the construction complete and in which TU this completion takes place:

CONSTITUENTS THAT REQUIRE CONSTITUENTS

SV⇒C

- (8) B 118 **/this would /this would* have :bēen*
 ə: # - . 119 *a/bout a . :couple of :mónths*
a'go# (S.1.6; 13, 118⇒119)
- (9) B 521 */((ə:))# 522 /I !don't 'know the nâme#*
 - - 523 *((the)) /first . /first nâme is#*
 524 */Y 'U 'S 'U !F ísn't it# .*
 (S.1.6; 54, 523⇒524)
- (10) B 606 *əhə: - - it's /not worth . the tròuble#*
 - - 607 */how do you ànalyse# - 608 /wòrth#*
 . 609 *it's not 'worth the tròuble# - - -*
 610 */not 'worth the tròuble# - - - 611*
/this is ə: ((the)) :little . :fellow
(([æ] in)) the department of sty:listics
at . :Bùrgos# . 612 ((/[bõ^di]#)) . 613
and he /wasn't :quite 'certain how to
:tackle# . 614 /worth the !tròuble# 615 in
/that sort of ((collo:cation)) - - -
 (S.1.1; 39-40, 607⇒608, 613⇒614)

S⇒V/⁺ Complementation/

- (11) A 720 *"/ór# . 721 you can /sée ·it# 722 as*
/being . like . it !vâles - - {/five
pòunds#}# 723 /it wòrths {/five pòunds#}#
724 /it is wòrth five pòunds# . 725 /it .
!"mèasures {/five pòunds#}# . 726 /ríght# .
 B 727 */yès# 728 /mh̃m#*
 A 729 *ə /where the !verb to !"be plus wòrth#*
- 730 /is to be :treated as . ə:m a únit# .
 731 */phrasal !vèrb# - - (S.1.1; 46, 729⇒730)*

CLAUSES THAT REQUIRE CLAUSES

Subordinate clause⇒Superordinate clause:

- (12) B 1035 */wèll# 1036 as /I sàid to them# 1037*
/I've been campaigning for this !ever
!since !Cànníng was . {/mòderator#}# 1038
/ten !yêars a'go# . (S.1.1; 67, 1036⇒1037)
- (13) A 577 *((2 sylls)) because /if . /if he dôesn't*
·work# 578 in /close . collabo:ration with
yōu# 579 and - - and /try to get - your
ex!pèrience# - - 580 he's going to go /badly
. at !sèa# . (S.1.1; 37, 577+578+579⇒580)

The analytic procedure was on the whole relatively unproblematic which is shown by the low number of problematic instances in the results.

- col. 22: Syntax 2 (type of complete and independent construction, ie those coded as '1' in col. 21); Bowman (1966) investigated informal conversation from a strictly linguistic point of view among members of her own family. The speakers were American high-school graduates and tape-recordings were made in a domestic setting familiar to all of them. This yielded a four-hour corpus of family talk. When starting to analyse her spoken corpus, Bowman faced the problem of segmentation into basic grammatical units. There is no definition of the sentence in speech that satisfies every linguist and, in fact, the sentence "may well be an entity which is incapable of true definition" (p. 16).⁸ The need for workable grammatical units became apparent. Bowman segmented her corpus into the following categories:

Major sentences:

independent constructions with subject + predicate

Minor sentences:

dependent constructions; subordinate clauses

independent constructions; elliptical sentences,

imperatives, one-word interrogatives, exclamations

Fragmentary sentences:

constructions which are broken off abruptly and

abandoned, realized through a sudden cessation of

phonation resulting in incomplete intonation and

stress pattern, eg *well that is a*

Bowman found that the commonest type of utterance in her corpus was the major sentence which was more than twice as common as the minor and fragmentary ones together. The fragmentary sentences made up about one tenth of the minor ones. Loman & Jørgensen (1971), confronted with the problem of giving an adequate description of the syntax of spoken Swedish, agree with Bowman that the sentence is not a workable unit, at least not the only one, in speech. They maintain that (p. 123):

A text may be analysed as a sequence of segments that are internally kept together by a network of syntactic relationships, and externally separated by the absence of such relationships between adjacent segments. A sequence of segments of this kind is a syntactic unit that may be called a *macrosyntagm*.

A macrosyntagm could then be said to be a syntactic unit that is functionally equivalent to a sentence. They distinguish between four different types of macrosyntagms:

1 SENTENCE: independent clause /⁺ dependent clause(s)/, eg *he came home, he came home this morning, he came home this morning when the sun was rising*.

2 SENTENCE FRAGMENT: this comprises constructions that have no finite verb and can be seen as elliptical constructions, eg *today* as an answer to *when did you arrive*; *by car* as an answer to *how did you arrive*, etc. Constructions with no subject, however, are labelled 'misconstructions', eg *can't believe it's true*. In the present study, the term 'ellipted sentence' will cover both of these two elliptical constructions as they will be regarded as equally complete and independent. Lyons (1968:174f) claims that:

when such [elliptical] utterances occur in a particular context, they are perfectly comprehensible, and from this point of view can hardly be called 'incomplete'. One must distinguish between contextual completeness and grammatical completeness.

Lyons (1977:589) continues his argument thus:

Spoken utterances of everyday conversation tend to be heavily context-dependent ... One aspect of context-dependence is manifest in what is traditionally called ellipsis. A conversation consisting entirely of grammatically complete text-sentences would generally be unacceptable as a text; and it is part of the language-competence of a speaker of the language (if not of his linguistic competence in the narrower sense) that he should be able to produce grammatically incomplete, but contextually appropriate and interpretable, sentence-fragments ... Ellipsis, then, is one of the most important and one of the most obvious effects of contextualization

Crystal (1980:156) points out that "it is quite normal to have the first part of a clause omitted (eg *looks like another nice day*)". Quirk et al (1972:544ff) give a list of elliptical constructions with recurring pattern.⁹ A few examples of this pattern, taken from the present material: *looks like it, don't know, haven't thought of him, must be a mistake, be an idea, remember* (intended as a question meaning 'do you remember').

3 INTERJECTION: a unit that is not a clause element, not even if the construction is expanded, eg *yes, m, oh, well, gosh, alright, OK, good heavens, fine*, etc.

4 ADDRESS: generally a syntactically isolated proper name, eg *John* used in the address function.

With one important modification, the macrosyntagm seems to be an adequate concept when one describes syntactically completed units for a study of turn-taking. For reasons given above, Loman & Jørgensen's approach to the elliptical constructions that they call Sentence fragments is doubtful. Native speakers would recognize utterances like *looks like it* as fully natural and very frequent and which could easily be expanded to a grammatically complete sentence. Column 22, Syntax 2, will then contain:

- 1 sentence (full)
- 2 ellipted sentence
- 3 interjection
- 4 address

An utterance that merely consists of an interjection is not a turn but a BC.

col. 23: Syntax 3 (process); a TU containing performance phenomena that have to do with the planning and production of syntactic structures (Blankenship & Kay 1964) including:

- 1 repetition: I I I couldn't find the place
- 2 reformulation: they didn't they couldn't see it
- 3 fragmentation: I heard him [kl] slam the door

col. 24: Syntax 4 (certain expressions);

- 1 *you know, you see*
- 2 tag questions (*isn't it, wouldn't they*, etc.).

col. 25: Pause 1 (external); here it is indicated whether a completed TU is immediately followed by silent (unfilled) or voiced (filled) pause. These have been coded as follows (p. 166ff):

- | | |
|-------|-----------------------------|
| 1 . | 5 - - - |
| 2 - | 6 ə/://, ə/://m |
| 3 - . | 7 combination of silent and |
| 4 - - | voiced pauses |

col. 26: Pause 2 (internal); a TU can contain pauses of the same kind as are accounted for in col. 25.

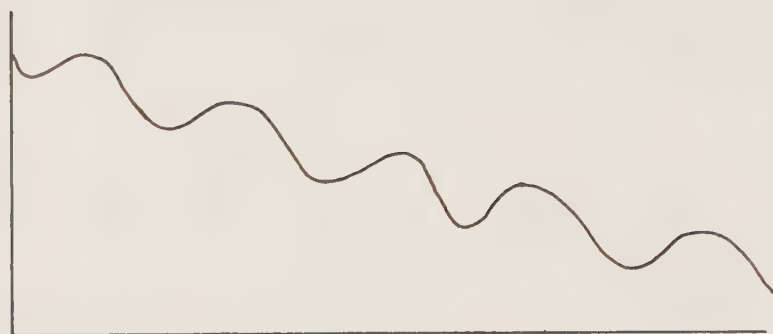
col. 27: Semantics; by this it is meant whether or not, at the termination of a TU, the speaker has reached a point that can be said to represent semantic completion, ie if the content of the construction is fully comprehensible at that point. As there is no simple way of formalizing a semantic analysis of this conversational material, the interpretation will have to be made subjectively. Admittedly, this may be regarded as the weakest point in the whole analysis. The semantic aspect of a TU is of three different types:

- 1 complete and independent
- 2 possibly complete and independent
- 3 incomplete

col. 28: Type of turn-taking; here it is indicated whether the change of speaker takes place with or without an overlap, ie whether there is simultaneous speaking involved. Two kinds of turn-taking have been coded:

- 1 no overlap between speakers
- 2 overlap between speakers

Other prosodic and paralinguistic features occurring in the latter part of a turn were found to be few and were therefore not included. Some of them were initially intended to be studied, eg 'slurred' and 'lax', both degrees of tension (p. 165), and 'descending' (p. 151), a feature belonging to the complex pitch-range system and which refers to a gradual descent stretching over a series of TUs. "Usually the ... descent takes place in a series of stages, each stage being coextensive with a tone-unit within the utterance." This phenomenon is "frequently found only within certain varieties of English, particularly in formal public speaking and dramatic utterance, where the full range of the voice is used for effect." This downward drift of pitch over one or more intonation groups where each intonational peak is lower than the preceding one could be illustrated as in Fig. 7:



(From Pierrehumbert 1980)

Fig. 7. The downdrift effect.

The downdrift effect has been observed, not only in English but also in newscasts in Finland-Swedish (Enkvist & Nordström 1978).

In an experiment, Lehisté (1975) noted that her subjects were able to decide the position in the discourse of a sentence they heard (beginning, middle, end of paragraph, or produced in isolation). She concludes that "the listeners have certain expectations regarding the suprasegmental shape of the sentence as it might appear within various positions in the paragraph or in isolation" (p. 197). On the other hand, Cutler & Pearson (in press) report on contrary results. In an experiment, they constructed five dialogues (here meaning utterances) read onto tape as turn-medial and turn-final ones by a group of native speakers. These utterances were presented to another group of native speakers, who were asked to judge whether an utterance that they heard sounded turn-medial or turn-final. The result was that the judges did not differentiate consistently between turn-medial and turn-final utterances and, surprisingly enough, the speakers who had produced them were no better at judging their own utterances.¹⁰

However, as was said before, the downdrift effect was found to be atypical of spontaneous conversation and was therefore left out.

Presence or absence of the features enumerated in the 28 columns above was then translated into numerical codes, and this set of data was fed into the computer (Univac 1100 at Lund Computing Centre) via terminal for calculations.¹¹

m: low,
 narrow B 14 a m well /what are we 'doing a# 'this weekènd#
 - 15 p to/morrow I've gòt . :dàncing 'class {in
 the /mòrning#}# p# m# - 16 for a əm
m: lax A 17 well I've /nothing dònwn m 'anyway . {at /àll#}#
 m# - - -
m: low,
 narrow B 18 m well they're /open to'morrow after'noon up
 till 'three o':clòck# . 19 p m' you re/member m'#
m': slurred !làst time we Nwént# . 20 and /they were *clòsed#
 p# m#*
 A 21 dim */are* you 'taking the :càr home# dim# .
 B 22 /yès {/plèase#}# -
m: narrow A 23 m well in /that 'case [n] :nò# m# . 24 I
 /thought "W^yôu were 'going to 'go and 'pick them
 'up# .
 B 25 dim well I /wās# dim# 26 but I . I'm not going
 to be in 'time to get :hòme# - -
 A 27 well if /I've got this 'meeting at 'three
m: narrow :thìrty# 28 a m and /say we 'finish this a'bout .
 !twènty 'past {or /quàrter 'past#}# a# m# .
 B 29 p /N m# p# - -
m: narrow A 30 or /earlier than thât# 31 m no /obviously it's
 'two o':clòck# m# - 32 you'll have "/plenty of
 'time to do :thât# .

Fig. 8. Text sample from Conversation S.4.1; 1-3, TUs 14-32.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
B			1	4			1	1								2			3	3	1	1			2		1	
B				1	5		2	1										4	3	3	1	1			2	1	1	
B			1	6		1	8						1	1							3				6	3	1	
A			1	7		2	1														1	1		5	1	1	1	
B			1	8		1	1				2								3	3	1	1		1		1		
B			1	9		1	6		2									4	3	3	1	1		1		1		
B			2	0		1	1						1				4	3	3	3					3	2		
A			2	1		1	1				2						4			1	1		1	1	1	1		
B			2	2		2	1													1	3		2		1	1		
A			2	3		1	1			2									3	1	2	3		1		1		
A			2	4		1	5		1	1		1								1	1		1		1	1		
B			2	5		1	3										4			1	1					1		
B			2	6		1	5			2										1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	
A			2	7		1	1			2											3					3		
A			2	8		2	1								1				3	3				1	1	3		
A			3	0		1	5														3					3		
A			3	1		1	1			2									3	3			2		2	3		
A			3	2		1	4			2		1									1	1		1		1		

Table 3. The coded version of the text sample from Conversation S.4.1; 1-3, TUs 14-32.

4.2 RESULTS

The results for the 28 coded columns will be given, one by one, but those which showed very low or no correlation with turn-taking will just be mentioned briefly. Starting with the last column first, it was found that speaking-turns whose ends did not overlap with the beginning of a following one (ie turns with the last TU having '1' in col. 28) were by far the most common type in the material and made up 83.4% (or 598 instances out of the 717 turns). In this chapter, only these will be subject to study and the remaining ones will be studied in Chapter 7. Further, as the aim was to study variations of the coded factors within the turn, like final (turn-final) TUs compared with non-final (turn-medial) ones, the very short turns were excluded. Turns that merely consisted of a single TU (8.6% of all turns in the present material) and which consequently do not allow such comparisons were also filtered out. Hence, the results below concern turns with more than one TU and where there was no simultaneous talk when the transition took place, altogether 564 turn.

Subordination and nucleus

Of the overall total of TUs in this filtered material (2031), the number of TUs containing subordinate TUs was small (6.1%).¹² There was no relevant difference between this total figure and the figure for final TUs containing subordination.¹³

There have been several studies on the distribution of nuclear tone types in different varieties of British English speech. My findings here will be given in Table 4 together with the earlier ones:

	Conver- sation	Reading aloud	Dis- cussion	ˋ	ˊ	ˉ	˥	˧	˨˩˥	˨˩˨
Quirk et al (1964)			+	52.5	24.7	2.1	6.9	3.9	9.3	0.6
Davy (1968) ¹⁴		+		50.2	24.6	5.5	11.1	2.1	5.5	0.6
Davy (1968) +	+			58.7	16.1	8.0	7.4	4.2	5.1	0.4
Crystal (1969) +	+			51.2	20.8	4.9	8.5	5.2	7.7	1.7
this study ¹⁵ +	+			60.2	13.3	4.8	7.9	4.3	8.2	0.5

Table 4. The distribution of nuclear tone types in four studies

As can be seen in Table 4, the fall is the most frequently occurring tone in all studied varieties and between twice and four times as common as the rise. Together, these two make up 3/4 of all nuclear types. In final TUs, only slightly lower figures were found for fall (59%) and slightly higher for rise (15.4%) as compared with the overall figures. The greatest individual differences were observed for level tone, accounting for 4.8% of all the nuclei and which had 42 instances in non-final but only 2 instances in final TUs.

Another thing worth mentioning is the position of the nuclear word within the TU. The prosodic prominence of the last word of the TU in the present material were in per cent:

Nucleus ¹⁶	78.5	} No nucleus
Stress	8.1	
Continuance	4.9	
Booster	0.1	
No prosodic prominence	8.4	

Table 5. The distribution in per cent of prosodic prominence on the last word of the TU.

The results in Table 5 are in line with Crystal's finding that "Less than 10 per cent of all nuclei have tails with stressed syllables on following words" (p. 224) and corroborates his claim that "the generalisation that tonicity falls on the last lexical item is therefore a most reliable one" (p. 224). There was no relevant difference in the present material between final TUs and non-final ones.

The notion of nucleus, generally held to be fundamental in the discussion of prosody, has been questioned by Brown, Currie & Kenworthy (1980:14) who maintain that they found it impossible to identify the nucleus in their data of Edinburgh Scottish English interviews. This, they claim, was further supported by instrumental measurements. They made an experiment in which trained phoneticians were asked to judge location and type of nucleus in a number of utterances they heard. The authors' conclusions are that the judges found it difficult to identify tones and that they were "pulled in one direction by phonetic maxima (particularly pitch height) and in another by the last lexical item with-

in a major syntactic constituent" and that the "last lexical item plays a very important part in this identification" (p. 154). Being unable to consistently identify tone groups by intonational criteria, they recognize instead 'pause-defined units'. When listening to the SEU audio tapes of unprepared conversation, one often finds that the nuclear contour is not very steep but is levelled out. There seems to be great freedom to modulate the actual shape of the tone into an almost flattened form.¹⁷ Thus, a nucleus is far from always produced with any 'ideal' contour.¹⁸

Monosyllabic pitch level and width, stress, step-up in pitch, and end of TU

As regards monosyllabic (nuclear) pitch level, both high and low were observed to be uncommon (less than 5% together), whereas for monosyllabic (nuclear) pitch width there was a greater difference. Narrow was much more common (14.8%) than wide (3.4%) but at the same time significantly more common in non-final than in final position.¹⁹

Although strong stress together with nucleus was found to be an unusual combination (5.0% of all nuclei had strong stress as well), it was still more than twice as frequent in non-final TUs. This finding is significant. Step-ups in pitch were common (30.2%), ie nearly every three TUs contained the combination of nucleus + step-up in pitch. Of the step-ups, booster and high booster were by far the two most common ones. There was no difference as regards position in turn.

When the last word of a TU did not carry the nucleus, it contained continuance in 4.9% of all such cases (Table 5). However, there was a significant difference between turn-final and turn-medial TUs. Continuance was more than twice as common in turn-medial TUs.

There was a high positive correlation between turn-taking and completion of a TU. 96.3% of all the non-overlapping turn-takings occurred after a completed TU.

Tempo

As regards tempo 1, the unmarked case was by far the most commonly occurring feature (83.2% of all examined TUs were unmarked for such tempo variations). Of the different variations, increased speed was the most frequent one. Two differences were found that had to do with the position of TU in the turn (Table 6). It was much more common for the speaker to use increased than reduced speed not only in his first TU but also in his last one:

	Turn- initial (= first TU)	(Turn- medial)	Turn- final (= last TU)
Higher than normal (<i>'increased'</i>)	11.5%		15.4%
Normal	86.0%		82.7%
Lower than normal (<i>'reduced'</i>)	2.5%		1.9%

Table 6. Tempo variations within the turn.

The result that the speaker used increased speed so often in his last TU was unexpected and led to a special study of the tempo problem. In order to get a broader view, a sample of the material was selected, with turns consisting of at least 6 TUs, in all 157 turns. This was done in order to see whether there were any tempo variations, particularly reduced speed, in the last but one TU that differed from the rest of the TUs. The result was that in the longer turns (>5 TUs) the tendency was the same for the pen-ultimate TUs; the speaker had no reduction in tempo here either but a few more increases than reductions.

Very few instances of tempo 2 (2.2%) existed. And existence of a drawled word among the last few words of a TU was in fact slightly less common in final than in non-final TUs.

Loudness and polysyllabic pitch level and width

Loudness variation displayed clear distributions. Louder volume than normal was more than twice as common in turn-medial TUs and weaker volume than normal almost twice as common in turn-final TUs (Table 7). Nearly every second turn (44.4%) had a reduction in loudness in its final TU. This finding is significant:

	Turn- initial (= first TU)	(Turn- medial)	Turn- final (= last TU)
Higher than normal (<i>'increased'</i>)	5.1%		1.4%
Normal	71.1%		54.2%
Lower than normal (<i>'reduced'</i>)	23.8%		44.4%

Table 7. Loudness variations within the turn.

Variations in polysyllabic pitch level and width among the last three TUs were uncommon (5.6% and 8.0%, respectively) both in general and for turns with more than 5 TUs. Lower than normal and narrower than normal were the two most frequently occurring individual variations, a little more common in turn-final than in turn-medial position.

Syntax

As for syntax 1 and 2, the proportion of the different features are given as percentages in Table 8:

	Turn-medial TU	Turn-final TU
Syntax 1 { complete and independent construction	78.8	95.2
{ construction possibly complete and independent	1.6	0.7
{ incomplete construction	19.6	4.1

		Turn-medial TU	Turn-final TU
Syntax 2	{ sentence (full)	81.6	90.1
	{ ellipted sentence	5.3	6.2
	{ interjection	12.8	3.7
	{ address	0.3	0.0

Table 8. The distribution of Syntax 1 and 2 in per cent.

It will be seen that nearly 8 out of 10 TUs (78.8%) contained a stretch whose termination represents a syntactically complete construction. Syntactic incompleteness only rarely existed when the new speaker took his turn since also a fairly large number of the turn-takings involving simultaneous turns took place just after a grammatical completion (see Chapter 7). It is also worth pointing out that of the complete constructions in syntax 2, the great majority were coextensive with a complete and independent clause and/or sentence both in turn-final and turn-medial TUs.²⁰

Less than 10% of all the TUs contained features of syntax 3. Repetition and reformulation were the two most common individual ones and they were slightly more common in turn-medial than in turn-final TUs.

As regards syntax 4, *you know*, *you see*, and in particular, tag questions, are borderline cases between turn-yielding (the speaker leaves the floor open), confirmation-seeking (the speaker wants a brief confirmation before he proceeds), and 'filler' (intimacy signal void of a response-seeking intent). It is the middle function, confirmation-seeking, that is the fuzzy one here and the problem is whether or not, when followed only by a brief confirmation (*m*, *yes*, and variants), there is a turn-taking relation (question + answer) or not (assertion + BC). For a continued discussion of these three functions, see Chapter 6. Their distribution related to partner reaction is given in Table 9 (see also Chapter 6, Table 27):

	Followed by a turn	Followed by a brief confirmation	Followed by no verbal reaction
<i>you know, you see</i>	14	14	72
tag question	19	14	12
Total	33	28	84

Table 9. The distribution of *you know, you see* and tag questions from the ongoing speaker related to partner reaction.

While a tag question was most often followed by turn-taking, *you know* and *you see* were generally followed by no verbal reaction, showing that their turn-yielding force is relatively weak.

Pause and semantics

Pause 1 has a clear distribution which will be found in Table 10:

	No pause	.	-	- .	- -	- - -	ə/:m/	comb.
Turn-medial position	71.4	12.6	8.1	0.9	3.8	1.8	1.0	0.5
Turn-final position	59.2	14.3	10.6	0.9	6.5	7.1	1.2	0.2
AVERAGE	68.9	13.0	8.6	0.9	4.3	2.9	1.0	0.4

Table 10. The distribution in per cent of external pauses.

As can be seen from Table 10, external pause (ie at a TU boundary) was more common in turn-final than in turn-medial TUs. This finding is significant. The average figures also indicate that there is a close relation between length of pause and frequency; the longer the pause is, the less frequent it is (with the exception of the very infrequent type '- .'). The greatest individual difference was found for the longest of the silent pauses which was four times more common in turn-final than in turn-medial position. It is evident that longer pauses do not, as a rule, appear within a turn but when they appear, there is a strong tendency for a new speaker to begin and for turn-taking to take place.²¹

Pause 2 did not show any clear patterning. For one thing, internal pause was much less common than external pause (87.9%

of all TUs had no kind of internal pause). Also, the individual distribution was unclear. Brief silent pause, being again the most common individual type, and voiced pause were almost twice as common in turn-medial as in turn-final position.

As for semantics, 95.2% of all final TUs represented termination of a semantically complete construction. The percentage is exactly the same as for syntactic completion which is only natural and could also be expected.

4.3 DISCUSSION

On the basis of the results obtained here, the discussion can concentrate on the features that had a clear correlation with turn-taking. There are five linguistic features operating as turn-yielding signals, or, to put it more correctly, signals of possible completion of the turn, because we do not know for certain if the ongoing speaker actually intended to give up his turn when displaying those features. He may have planned to continue, having only reached a juncture in his talk other than intended end of turn. What we do know is that the listener wanting to take the speaker role did so at a point in the discourse which is characterized by a certain combination of features. These features play a decisive part on the interactional level, facilitating smooth exchanges of turns and functioning as the loci that the listener selects for his attempts. The five features are:

Prosody; completion of a TU with a non-level nucleus	96.3%
Syntax; completion of a syntactic sequence	95.2%
Semantics; completion of a semantic sequence	95.2%
Loudness; decrease in volume	44.4%
Silent pause; following immediately after end of TU	40.8%

Table 11. The linguistic features in turn-final position with the highest correlation with turn-taking.

The combination of the first three features in Table 11 forms a major juncture, a niche, in the discourse and can be called a 'grammatical boundary' (henceforth GB). The grammatical boundary constitutes a central factor for the listener when he wants to

take over. The remaining few per cent of turn-takings that did not occur at a GB were of two types. One was that the speaker was interrupted and cut off before he had reached a GB (see Chapter 7, Fig. 17). The other was that his turn petered out in the middle of his construction resulting in an anacoluthon and a lengthy pause which may have been interpreted as the turn is now given up and the floor is free. Fig. 9 shows the combinational distribution of the five features:

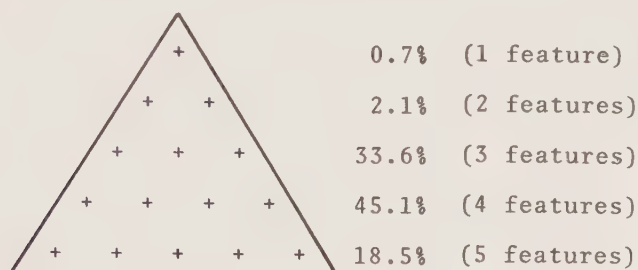


Fig. 9. The combinational distribution of the features in Table 11.

As can be seen, 1/3 (33.6%) of all instances of turn-taking took place at a combination of three features, which here proved to be the GB. In almost 2 cases out of 3, there were at least four of the five features present.

Knowing that the great majority of all turn-takings took place at a GB we could argue that the GB is obviously a 'decision point' for a listener; to switch or not to switch here. If he chooses not to do so, his next appropriate chance will be with the next GB. Table 12 gives the distribution of GBs in turn-medial (= no turn-taking) and turn-final (= turn-taking) position. In order to eliminate factors that would in different degrees affect his decision, turn-takings preceded by a question, a tag question, or *you know*, *you see* were not included here. A longer story in S.1.1 was also excluded. It appears that, on an average, the listener took the floor at almost every fifth (18.5%) GB that he was exposed to. However, the turn-taker obviously preferred and selected those GBs which also had at least one of the other features as well. Of the bare GBs, only 1 out of 10 was used as a switching-point whereas the figure for GBs accom-

	Turn-medial position	Turn-final position	Row %	Column %	TOT
GB only ('bare')	774	83	9.7	25.6	857
GB followed by a pause	351	71	16.8	21.9	422
GB preceded by reduced loudness	173	78	31.1	24.1	251
GB both followed by a pause and preceded by re- duced loudness	125	92	42.4	28.4	217
Total	1423	324	18.5		1747

Table 12. The distribution of GBs in relation to turn-taking.

panied by both the other features was observed to be more than 4 out of 10. It seems as if the listener treats the GB as a necessary but not sufficient condition to take over as he did so in only 1 case out of 4 at a bare GB. The reason why speaker-shift is not executed at an existing GB is not always because of the listener but the possibility to effectuate a switch can, occasionally, be small or even ruled out due to the speaker's various ways of controlling the turn. Increased speed and loudness, for instance, at the boundary will be a 'knockout factor' to an execution, using a term from Sankoff (1978:66). So, even if a GB has been produced, other factors may preclude a realization of speaker-switch in the actual situation.

From a somewhat different angle, the relation between turn-taking and the set of specific linguistic features given above could be illustrated graphically as in Fig. 10. In the figure, a speaking-turn is seen as a multidimensional message whose various dimensions are like converging and diverging 'pulses' or 'waves' with peaks and troughs. The waves are stretches along these dimensions, which, when having reached a trough position, have also reached a completion on that dimension. After that, the wave can only continue by taking a new direction, ie a new sequence is then begun. When syntactically, prosodically, and semantically complete sequences cooccur in a trough (GB), this

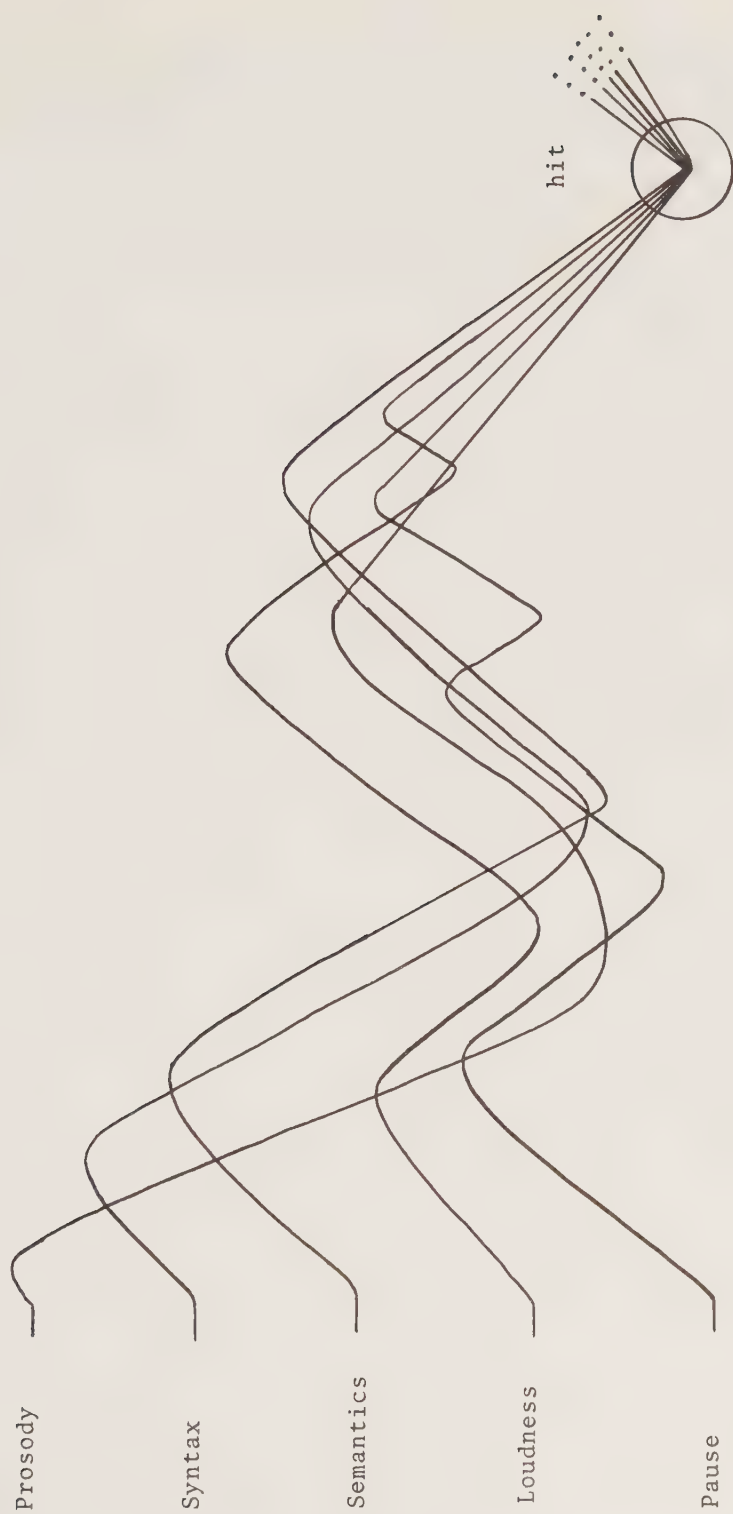


Fig. 10. The turn seen as a multidimensional message.

is a 'hit' (circled in the figure) and this hit, often also co-occurring with a step-down in loudness and/or a pause, represents a point of possible completion of the turn to which the potential turn-taker pays specific attention. The GB is the minimum requirement of a hit but is more often than not combined with reduced loudness or a pause or both. The GB serves as the primary cue, and loudness reduction and pause serve as secondary cues, for a listener who wants to take the floor.

While there are a number of signals of continuation (turn-holding), such as level tone, starting with a subordinate clause, voiced pause, etc., there exists no specific, unambiguous marker (feature or combination of features) of termination of the turn (turn-yielding) hitherto known. It is, for example, possible that text units above the sentence level but below the turn level ('paragraphs') are marked off with the same pattern as termination. One exception is that pauses may be longer after turn-final paragraphs than after turn-medial ones (Lehiste 1982:126). We should therefore be careful not to be misled to believe that the displayed features discussed here are in a one-to-one relationship with turn-yielding. A better term would instead be 'possible turn-yielding signals'. As a consequence of this, the potential turn-taker, who never at any given moment when there is no particular indication of continuation from the ongoing speaker, possesses full knowledge of intended termination will have to calculate with probabilities. The more of the five features that are jointly displayed, the more a stretch assumes a final character, and the more probable it is that it is understood as turn-yielding. The GB is then the minimum requirement of a hit or a transition-relevance place (TRP). A person who wants to take the turn but also wants to be quite sure that he has found the proper place before he takes action, will have to wait until he has also received secondary cues. Often enough, the bare GB is the sole factor being used, and, just as frequently, the listener takes a chance here. The decision whether to enter at such a bare GB or to wait for one with also one or more secondary cues is, presumably, a matter of eagerness, self-control, and politeness and has to do with the relative priority a person gives to his turn over his partner's.

A GB corresponding to end of paragraph and particularly when also accompanied by secondary cues, is always in the risk zone of

being taken as end of turn. For such a GB to escape being interpreted as termination, it has to be protected in some way to hold off the listener. Efficient means of protection are absence of pause and increased loudness, which have the effect that the GB will not be understood as an appropriate TRP. Thereby, the power of attraction on the part of the listener to enter here is considerably reduced or eliminated. Lack of protection of this kind could explain why a person is often interrupted as in studies by Beattie (1982) and Beattie, Cutler & Pearson (1982).²²

What triggers turn-taking at the content level, particularly for longer turns, has to do with the shared knowledge of how the topic is structured. For example, it often has an introduction, followed by reasoning or a list of events, and ends with a point or a conclusion. This is a common procedure in argumentation and story-telling. Turn-taking is therefore likely to occur at those boundaries which are also 'topic boundaries'. The topical aspects are outside the scope of this study. It is the complex interplay of kinesic, intonational, pausal, loudness, and topical realities around the GB that determines which GBs are selected as targets by the potential turn-taker. This picture is further complicated by his more subjective considerations, related to the relative priority he gives to his contribution over the ongoing one. This can result in a consideration merely of the GB, sometimes not even that, and a disregard of all other factors.

There is a clear difference between the GB and reduced loudness. The GB operates as a confirmation of a point of possible completion of the turn, with the pause working additively to it, whereas loudness reduction, which starts before the GB, indicates that it may be about to emerge. The difference between the GB and the pause, on the one hand, and reduced loudness on the other could be compared with railway signalling. There are two main types of such signals: 'home' and 'distant'. The difference between them is that the home signal either displays a green ('go') or red ('stop') permanent light. The distant signal, located some hundred metres earlier, mirrors the information given by the home signal but with flashing light. The idea of the distant signal is to inform the driver at an early stage what to expect when he gets to the home signal (Fig. 11). Using this parallel, loudness reduction is like the distant one, the GB is like the home signal, and the pause is further evidence that the home signal gives

correct information, for example, the track in front is empty:

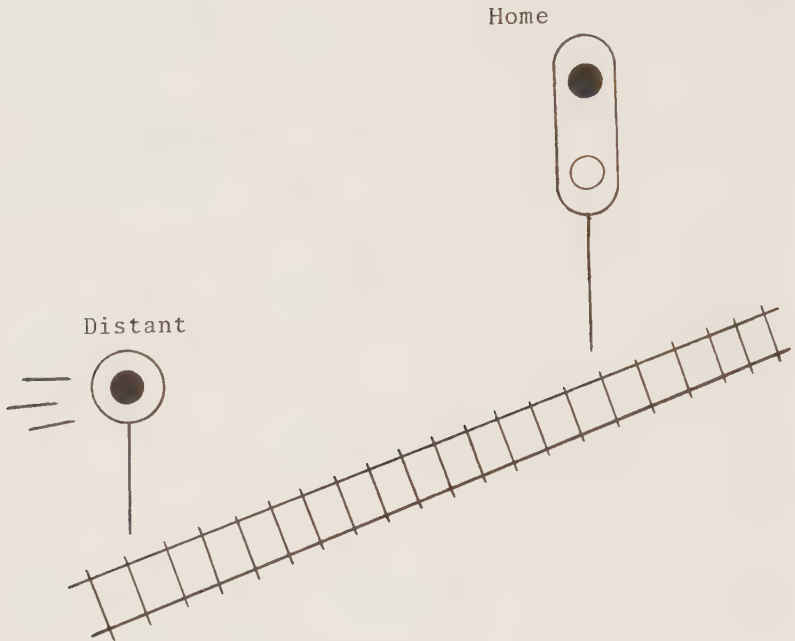


Fig. 11. Distant and home railway signals.

But the listener cannot be fully certain whether a speaker will actually finish at the GB that is coming into view. Nor can the engine driver be fully certain that, when he comes to the home signal, it will actually display what he could expect to find, according to the distant signal. Things may have happened after he passed the distant one which caused the home signal to switch. But the more indications there are pointing in the same direction, the more probable it is that clashes can be avoided.

Variations in speed and loudness seem to reflect the speaker's adaptation to the situational conditions and to the relative degree of importance he assigns to the different stretches of his output. Black (1954:144) notes that "The satisfactory rate and level may vary with the magnitude of the speaking situation, possibly the degree of responsibility that the speaker feels". By reducing his loudness towards the end of the turn, the speaker signals that he may be about to finish and the listener is informed that the chances are that a hit is approaching. In Black's

terms, we could say that by signalling loudness reduction, the speaker is also indicating that he may shortly be willing to hand over the responsibility for the turn to his partner.

The finding that the speaker speeded up in nearly 1 case out of 7 in his final TU (Table 6) deserves a comment. The reason for this could either be that he, after having delivered the essential part of his message ('body'), had only less important information ('tail') to convey and did so by going up in speed as a tailing-off technique. Another possibility is that the speaker, realizing that the listener had understood the intended message, made a quick termination in order to protect the turn, to be able to finish before the other entered. To sum up, it was found that:

- turn-taking is predominantly executed at grammatical boundaries
- more than 8 out of 10 turn-takings take place without simultaneous talking
- 8 nuclei out of 10 occur on the last word of the TU
- 4 out of 10 final TUs are followed by a pause.

Against this background, we can say something about a listener's strategies when he wants to take over. Let us concentrate on the tonal aspect, the nuclear element, which falls on the most prominent syllable of a TU. Halliday (1967) claims that the tonic element has a crucial function from the view of information structure. It marks 'new information' in an utterance: "Information structure is realized phonologically by 'tonality', the distribution of the text into tone groups: one information unit is realized as one tone group" (p. 200). This means that the nuclear word is much of a key word for the listener with respect to the interpretation of the message. The nuclear words constitute, as it were, focal points of his message, representing the new, unexpected, and hence the kernel bits of information, the core of the TU. It is when the listener hears the nuclear word that he will finally understand the message or will have any hypothesis he may have formed about it confirmed.

Brazil, Coulthard & Johns (1980) claim that this view is only partly true. What is new in the information structure is not contained in every nuclear word but the newness has to do with specific tone choice (p. 15f):

some parts of what a speaker says merely *make reference* to features which he takes to be already present in the interpenetrating worlds of speaker and hearer ... the speaker has a major choice between the fall-rise tone, hereafter called *referring* tone ... and the falling, *proclaiming* tone ... in choosing referring tone for a particular part of his message the speaker is marking it as part of the existing common ground, whereas by choosing proclaiming tone he is indicating his expectation that the area of common ground will be enlarged, as a result for instance of the speaker being told something he didn't already know

Fall-rise (referring tone) would mark given information and falling (proclaiming tone) would mark new information. They thereby give tone choice an interactional explanation arguing that it "is not dependent on linguistic features of the message, but rather on the speaker's assessment of the relationship between the message and the audience" (p. 18).

The listener receives the nuclear word (which in 6 cases out of 10 has a falling tone in the present material) at the last stage of the TU. At the GB that may follow immediately after the nuclear word, he needs very little time to consider what he has just heard and to decide whether to switch at this point or not. This is shown by the fact that a pause exists somewhat infrequently at this point. He may, however, have been given a distant warning in the form of a step-down in loudness, a pre-signal on which he can rely to a certain extent. When facing a GB, he will be pressed for time because shortly after the boundary has appeared, it will disappear if no attempt is made and the next opportunity comes at the next GB. Even though the speed of delivery may be high, the listener is able both to spot the boundary and to switch as soon as it has appeared. He is following closely in the speaker's footsteps decoding his output, and what the speaker says puts gradual restrictions on what can follow. This circumstance increases the predictability of the intended message. The listener will therefore often have his hypothesis ready before he has eventually received the nuclear word and is consequently prepared to act when a GB is entered. He has switched at such places a great number of times having gradually become familiar with this interactional patterning since the earliest stage of his life.²³

4.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the relation between end of a speaking-turn and a number of factors including prosody, syntax, and semantics was examined in four conversations and calculated by computer. Subject to study were those cases where the new speaker entered without any simultaneous talking. It was found that end of turn showed a high correlation with three specific factors: prosody; end of a TU with a non-level nuclear tone; syntax; end of a syntactically completed sequence, here a macrosyntagm in the form of a full or ellipted sequence; and semantics; end of a fully comprehensible stretch. The joint completion of these three, present in about 95% of all cases, constitutes a major juncture in speech and was here termed a 'grammatical boundary' (GB). On the interactional level, a GB is a niche in the output, a point of possible completion of the turn and therefore a transition-relevance place (TRP). It is a recognised and conventional place for turn-taking towards which the listener orients himself when wanting to take the floor. By producing a GB, the speaker also flags a TRP provided that no other signal of continuation is displayed at the same time, such as a step-up in loudness. Turn-taking is therefore largely a matter of niche-finding through GB-spotting. In addition, before the new speaker took over the turn, the ongoing speaker's turn had a step-down in loudness in the last few words in more than four cases out of ten; just as often, there was a pause immediately after the GB. Reduced loudness at the end of the turn serves as a 'pre-signal' for a TRP indicating that the GB that may soon turn up will probably be such a relevant niche if loudness conditions continue to remain the same. This type of pre-signalling together with the listener's ability to foresee an emerging GB from the logical conclusions drawn from his decoding which make some continuations more probable than others, would explain why a pause was relatively uncommon between the two speakers' turns at a switching-point. When no step-down in loudness precedes a GB, the potential turn-taker can instead direct his attention to the existence of an accompanying pause. It was found that the bare GB had only a relatively weak attraction on the part of the listener. Of all turn-takings, only one out of four took place at a bare GB where-

as three out of four occurred when the GB was also accompanied by either reduced loudness, a pause, or both. The GB appears to be a primary cue, a necessary but generally not sufficient factor to form a TRP, whereas loudness reduction and pause appear to be secondary cues. It therefore seems that it is only when at least one of the secondary cues is present that a stretch assumes a final character. As there exists no specific and unambiguous marker of turn-finality which differs from, for example, end of 'paragraph', the potential turn-taker will have to calculate with probabilities. The more cues he is presented with, the more likely it is that he has heard a final sequence and thus a true TRP. Since they share the same linguistic code, this is a result of a mutual awareness between the participants. The speaker knows that the more cues he transmits, the more likely it is that the listener interprets the situation as a TRP. The decision to enter at a bare GB or wait for a GB with one or more secondary cues presumably has to do with degree of eagerness to enter in relation to degree of politeness and self-control.

The relation between a GB and a TRP could be illustrated with a metaphor. The zebra lines on a street represent, at all events, a pedestrian crossing (GB). But it is not equally relevant to cross here at any moment. If there is also a traffic light, it is not relevant to cross until "walk" (reduced loudness and/or a pause) is indicated (TRP). To bring this metaphor a step further; if an ambulance is approaching at full speed (the speaker goes up in speed and loudness and/or there is no pause at the GB), a person aware of the situation will not find it relevant to cross even if "walk" is displayed. These are considerations a person makes whether he wants to cross the street or take the turn in conversation.

The results in this study have corroborated some of Duncan's (1972) findings and qualified others. While Duncan gives all his six 'turn-yielding signals' the same value, the present study has found that some features have more of a central and primary role than others with a more secondary role. *You know*, *you see* and *drawl* did not seem to play any important part for turn-taking in this material.

No difference related to sex or age of speaker or to the manner of recording could be discerned.

Notes

- 1 Chafe (1980), interested in the relation between language and thought, argues that "A property of spontaneous speech readily apparent to anyone who examines it closely is that it is produced, not in a flowing stream, but in a series of brief spurts" (p. 13). He calls such a spurt an 'idea unit' and claims that it is essentially the same as the tone unit. These idea units, he assumes, "express focuses of consciousness" (p. 16) and he found them to have a mean length of about 2 seconds or about 6 words (p. 14).
- 2 In TUs containing compound nucleus types and subordinate TUs, only the last nuclear word has been coded for features in columns 9-12.
- 3 Columns 9-12 refer to the nuclear syllable only.
- 4 By 'normal' in connection with prosody and paralinguistics is meant here the person's normal speed, loudness, pitch level, etc. The analytic system rests on the establishment of such a norm for every speaker.
- 5 Crystal (p. 155) points out that both *allegro* and *lento* are uncommon.
- 6 In the SEU analysis, modifications in polysyllabic pitch range (level and width) have been bounded with an 'm' in the transcription and specified in the margin (see Fig. 8).
- 7 Note that 'complete' is not used here in any prescriptive way.
- 8 Cf Fries's (1952:287) statement: "It is important to recognize that neither the sentence ... nor the paragraph are units of the living language of speech".
- 9 "The ellipted items are those that normally occur before the onset in a tone unit, and hence have light stress and are on a low pitch ... It may therefore be more accurate to ascribe the omission to subaudibility rather than to ellipsis" (Quirk et al 1972:545).
- 10 The intonation of the sentence is learnt in the classroom during reading-lessons. When attending such a lesson in a British school, I observed how the teacher corrected the children by saying: "No, full stop!" and the child re-read the last sentence with a different, declining intonation pattern.
- 11 To minimize the number of typing errors, the feeding was done twice and by different typists. The two input versions were then matched and misprints were spotted and corrected.
- 12 The TUs with inferior sound quality (col. 6) were also found to be few, both for the whole material (4.7%) and for the final TUs (6.5%).
- 13 A TU containing a subordinate TU consequently has two nuclei. Such a TU has here been counted as containing one nucleus.
- 14 Davy (1968) made a comparison between conversation and reading aloud. His study is related by Crystal (p. 225, footnote).

- 15 0.8% of all TUs contained no nucleus.
- 16 Of the nuclear types, Crystal (p. 215) mentions that level tone "nearly always occurs on the last lexical item before the phonetic boundary". In the present material, level tone fell on the last word of the TU in all cases except 4.
- 17 This freedom to vary the tonal contour is presumably to be seen as a kind of contextual reduction. In this sense, but without pushing it too far, one could call it 'prosodic ellipsis'.
- 18 The acoustic correlates of nucleus are intensity, fundamental frequency (both level and direction), and time duration. In a small study of 12 TUs of the LLC (Oreström & Thavenius 1978), nucleus showed almost full correlation with intensity and fundamental frequency direction and high correlation with duration and fundamental frequency level.
- 19 When the total number of cases is as high as around 2000, a chi-square test will tend to be significant because of this fact. Therefore, only $p < .01$ will be accepted as level of significance. Statistically significant results will be mentioned when occurring.
- 20 Quirk et al (1964) in their study of the correspondence between units of grammar and units of intonation found that "there is a high degree of co-extensiveness between tone-units and grammatical units of group, phrase, and clause rank" (p. 691).
- 21 A study by Lehisté, quoted in a summarized form in Lehisté (1982:126), accounts for differences of pause length between sentences depending on their discourse position. Pauses between sentences within a paragraph were, on an average, less than half as long as those between paragraphs within a turn and less than 1/6 as long as those between turns.
- 22 A case in point is Mrs Thatcher who appears to talk in the same way in the interview situation as when she delivers a speech without being fully aware that she is not alone on the stage when being interviewed but that there is another speaker wanting to enter when he has found a relevant niche in her output.
- 23 In order to broaden the study of turn-taking to groups of people other than those recorded in the LLC who are all academics having their roots in southern England, an experiment was carried out. A number of conversational extracts from the LLC were selected for a listening test and played onto tape. Test subjects were 20 undergraduate students (10 males and 10 females aged 18-22) at the University of Birmingham and 20 school teachers (10 males and 10 females aged 21-64) in the Shetland Islands.

The experiment was carried out in the following way. The subjects were tested individually and instructed to listen to the conversational extracts and to imagine that they were participants of the actual conversation but at the moment being the listener. They were then asked to indicate by knocking on the table where they would find it natural to come in with a contribution if they had something to say, something that was not merely a brief expression of agreement,

like *m*, *yes*, *that's right*, and so on.

The number of knocks totalled 816, almost equally shared between the male and the female subjects. But it was found that they knocked more often when they heard a person of the opposite sex talk on the tape than when one of their own sex talked ($p < .01$). 95% of all knocks came at a GB, 78% at a GB followed by a pause, and 30% at a GB preceded by reduced loudness. The males were on the whole quicker to knock when they had spotted a GB whereas the females waited for a longer pause before they knocked.

5 Turn length

*Let thy speech be short,
comprehending much in few words*
Apocrypha, Ecclesiasticus

5.1 INTRODUCTION

A quantitative description of interaction can be carried out in various ways, but there are two main approaches to measurement of the participants' spoken activity: one linguistic (in terms of utterances, sentences, tone units, words, etc.) and one non-linguistic (in terms of speaking-time). This study of turn length will only adopt the linguistic approach.

Duration in physical terms (speaking-time) of the verbal output has been focussed on in a number of studies (Chapple 1949, Strodbeck 1951, Jaffe 1968), to mention only a few. Duncan & Fiske (1977:33ff) studied the time aspect of speaking-turns in five-minute interactions between graduate students 22-36 years of age. The subjects were asked to participate in two different videotaped dyadic constellations, one with a partner of the same sex and one with a partner of the opposite sex. Each speaking-turn was counted and timed with a stopwatch. They found that the overall average of turn time (a person's total amount of speaking-time in a dyad) was 150 seconds but with great individual variations, ranging between 18 and 283 seconds (p. 65). The average subject had 13 turns of 13 seconds each, ranging between 2 and 71 seconds for the individual speakers (p. 69). They also found significant values ($p < .02$) for the sex variable with higher mean of turn length for the male speakers compared with the females (14.7 versus 11.2 seconds). Females had shorter turns than the males and more turns in the total coded interaction (p. 56).

From the linguistic point of view, length of tone units has been studied by Quirk et al (1964), who measured TUs produced in two panel discussions of the SEU collections by the number of 'institutional words'. In all, their material included some 10,000 running words from ten speakers all of whom were university-educated men of middle-age or over, well accustomed to speaking in

public. They found that the overall mean length of a TU was 5.3 words. Since this is just the mean value, it is worth mentioning that the TUs ranged between 1 and 23 words. However, very long TUs were reported to be few, whereas TUs consisting of very few words were many. The highest number of occurrences clustered around 3, 4, and 5 words. However, their material included no subordinate TUs, an analytic distinction that was introduced later in the SEU transcriptions. In addition, they do not mention whether there were any incomplete TUs, either due to the speaker interrupting himself or being interrupted by another speaker. Further, they only included words that can be found in a dictionary. By tradition, dictionaries have been based almost exclusively on the written language, which means that some items in spoken language will not be found in a dictionary but nevertheless belong to the word level. One example is *m* meaning 'yes' which is among the 10-20 most common 'words' in conversation judging by the frequencies in the present material.

5.2 METHOD

The method of measurement used here was the following. All turns in the whole material were measured in terms of number of words. Since both sentences and TUs can vary in length from one word and upwards (cf TUs 30 and 43 in Fig. 12), word counting will result in greater accuracy.¹ For instance, one speaker in a dyad may well have more TUs but fewer words than the other speaker. As this study is based on an orthographic transcription, a word will be defined as "any string of characters ... with space on either side" (Francis & Kučera 1979:5). This means, for example, that both *I* (TU 34) and *I've* (TU 37) are counted as one word each. As long as the word itself is complete, it will be counted and no distinction will be made between the different types of construction it enters into, i.e. a word is counted whether it occurs in what could be called complete grammatical constructions or in reformulations (TU 14), repetitions (TU 22), anacolutha (TU 12), and so on. But also a number of other items will be counted as words here when they can be given a word-class assignment. This goes, in particular, for certain items that have been rendered in square brackets in the LLC. Thus *m* (TU 17), which is a very

- B ¹ ((of /Spanish)) . graphòlogy#
- A ² /wèll# . ³((if)) did /yóu 'set 'that# -
- B ⁴ /well !Jòe and 'I# ⁵ /sèt it between 'us# ⁶ /actually
!Joe 'set the :pàper# ⁷ and *((3-4 sylls))*
- A ⁸ */wèll# . ⁹ "/mây* I 'ask# ¹⁰ /what goes !ìnto that
paper nów# ¹¹ be/cause I !have to advīse# . ¹² ((a))
/couple of people who are !dòing ði: ə
- B ¹³ well /what you :dõ# ¹⁴ /is to - - /this is sort of
between the :twò of 'us# ¹⁵ /what *you* :dõ# ¹⁶ is to
/make sure that your 'own . !càndidate
- A ¹⁷ */m##
- B ¹⁶ is . *** /that your . there's /something that your
:own candidate can :hàndle# - - ¹⁸ ((I won't))
- A ¹⁹ *((/yèah#))*
- B ¹⁸ ((be a mīnute# - - ²⁰ 3-4 sylls)) - - -
- A ²¹ /àh# - ²² ə: you /mean that ði ði {the !pàpers} "àre#
²³ /more or less :set ad !hòminem# ²⁴ /àre 'they# -
- B ²⁵ ə:h - - they /shòuldn't bé# - - ²⁶ /but əh - I /mean
òne# ²⁷ /sets - - òne 'question# ²⁸ /now I !mean !this
fellow's doing ((the)) language of :àdvertising# ***
²⁹ ((so /very)) wèll#
- A ³⁰ */yèah##
- B ³¹ +((/give him one on))+
- A ³² +is /this a spare páper##
- B ³³ ((ə /yèah# ³⁴ I actually /got it for yóu#))
- A ³⁵ /thank you very múch# ³⁶ ((1 syll)) */thanks very
much in:dèed##
- B ³⁷ *I've /probably got some :mòre## ³⁸ [fə:] /further
bàck# .
- A ³⁹ be/cause you see ((I)) - ə /some of our pèople#
⁴⁰ (. clears throat) ((who)) are /dòing LEs# - - ⁴¹ ə:m
/have to consider which !{pàper} . to "dò# ⁴² and /I
wondered . whether . ði . gra:phology páper# . ⁴³ is in
/fact . ə:m./whether it !tends to be a com:pàrative
gra'phology 'paper# ⁴⁴ /or - a his:tòrical gra'phology
'paper# -

Fig. 12. Sample from Conversation S.1.1; 1-3, TUs 1-44.

common element in conversation and often being a single utterance, is regarded as a word when it is functionally equivalent to *yes*. When having this function, it typically forms a separate TU generally carrying falling intonation.² (For a separate study of the back-channel items, see Chapter 6.) Moreover, when *ði:* (TU 12) and *ði* (TU 42) are definite articles functioning as determiners, they will be included in the word count.³ Word partials, like [fə:] (TU 38) and pure hesitation phenomena, like ə: (TU 22), which do not qualify as words, are not included in the word count. Finally, a special problem is offered by those words in the LLC which appear in double brackets indicating that they are not fully audible on the sound tapes (TU 1). In spite of the uncertainty of these words, they have been included, provided they fulfil the stated criteria. The reason is, first, that the aim here is not to discuss the exact reading of these words or whether the interpretation suggested by the analyst is reasonable or not and, second, that exclusion of them would greatly affect the statistics of turn length. In some cases, however, the contents of the double brackets is so unclear that only an estimated number of syllables have been indicated by the analyst (TU 7). Such instances have been excluded here.

5.3 RESULTS

Number of turns

As a participant in a dyad has every second turn, the frequencies for turn-taking are the same for both speakers. The statistics for turn-takings in the whole material are the following:

Total number of turn-takings	1888
Occurring at a GB	1699 (90.0%)
Occurring with no overlap	1633 (86.5%)
Occurring both at a GB and with no overlap	1569 (83.1%)

Table 13. Number of turn-takings in the whole material.

This chapter will focus on those 1633 instances that occurred with no overlap (corresponding to 1643 turns as the last turn of each conversation is not followed by turn-taking). The remaining overlapping ones will be studied in Chapter 7.

The number of turns for one speaker can differ by at most 1 from the number of turns for the other speaker. Different total numbers of turns in a dyad means then that one person had the first as well as the last speaking-turn. Table 14 gives the distribution of turns for all the 20 speakers in the material. As can be seen (and in fact also expected), there was great variation in the total number of turns between the dyads. The difference between the extreme totals for each conversation (range) is 267 turns. Two conversations (S.5.8 and S.5.10) had far fewer turns than the others.⁴

No pattern could be found of number of turns related to the speaker variables. The dyads with the highest number of turns were three with mixed sexes (male-female), and the ones with the fewest turns were two unmixed ones (one male-male and one female-female). The relation between turn number and the other extralinguistic variables showed similar unclear patterning.

Number of turns is, of course, closely related to aim and type of conversation and to factors such as the topic, involvement and knowledge of the topic. It is highly likely that the differences noted in Table 14 could be explained with reference to these factors. But there are also other possible explanations, such as the manner of recording, a factor that will be examined in a following section.

Length of turns

The length of turns in terms of number of words showed great differences between the speakers. Since the lengths of the conversations are very similar (except for Conversation S.1.2:1), approximately 5000 institutionalized words, fewer turns mean longer turns and more turns mean shorter turns. In every dyad there was a difference in the speakers' total production of words varying between 46 and 1610 words (Table 15). In 8 of the 10 conversations, the difference was >550 words. This would mean, in general, that one person talked considerably more than the other in each dyad.

Conversation

S.1.1		S.1.1.2:1		S.1.4		S.1.6		S.4.1		S.4.2		S.5.8		S.5.9		S.5.10		S.6.2		TOTAL
A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	
83	83	37	36	109	108	53	52	117	116	156	155	29	29	121	120	22	22	97	98	
Total		73		217		105		233		311		58		241		44		195		1643

Table 14. Number of turns for all speakers.

Conversation

S.1.1		S.1.1.2:1		S.1.4		S.1.6		S.4.1		S.4.2		S.5.8		S.5.9		S.5.10		S.6.2		TOTAL
A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	
1964	3574	888	2410	1995	2545	2410	2477	1956	2674	1801	3244	1687	3207	2999	1743	2215	2261	1530	2717	
Total		3298		4540		4887		4630		5045		4894		4742		4476		4247		46.297

Table 15. Number of words occurring in turns for all speakers.

Inspection of the raw data in the material as regards turn length revealed that the turns assumed values between 1 and 917 words. The great majority (1557 out of the total 1643 turns or 94.8%), however, were <100 words long. For ease of presentation, lengths of turns were divided into classes with a class-interval of 10 (1-10, 11-20, 21-30, etc.). This gave 11 classes with a terminating open one (>100). Class mid-marks will then be 5.5, 15.5, 25.5, etc. The internal distribution of turns, length of turns in words, will be seen in Tables 16, 17, and 18 and with cumulative frequencies in per cent in Table 19.⁵ Turn lengths for the majority of the speakers were steeply graded, being characterized by gradually decreasing frequencies from shorter to longer, generally with a step-up in the last class (>100). But this step-up is only illusory since the class is an open one made up of very low values, mostly 1, and the general decreasing tendency is therefore unaffected by this. For 16 of the 20 speakers (80%), the statistical mode is to be found in the first class (1-10), and for 17 of the speakers (85%) in the first two classes (1-20). All the other three modal values are to be found in the last class (>100). In Conversation S.5.10, both speakers' modes are >100 words. The modal values accounted for 24.1-63.5% of all values, but only 3 of the modes (Speaker A in S.4.1, S.4.2, and S.6.2) made up the majority of the speakers' total number of frequencies. Table 19 shows that 2 turns out of 3 (66.5%) were 1-20 words long with individual variation ranging between 41.4 and 85.9 (with the exception of the three speakers with modes >100).⁶ Almost 8 turns out of 10 (77.4%) were 30 words or shorter.

Table 20 gives the mean values for every individual speaker. The overall mean is 28.2, but there is considerable individual variation (11.5-110.6). Twelve speakers had <28.2 words and three had >100. 15 of the 20 speakers (75%) had <50 words. As the ranges are great (Table 21), the mean values are not sufficiently representative of the central tendency and too great importance should not be ascribed to them.⁷

Table 22 presents the median for every individual speaker. For 15 of the 20 speakers (75%), the median fell in the first two classes (1-20). With the four speakers having the highest modes and/or highest mean values excluded, only one, consequently, had a median other than 5.5 or 15.5. Returning to Table 16, we will

Conversation

Turn length in words	S.1.1		S.1.2:1		S.1.4		S.1.6		S.4.1		S.4.2		S.5.8		S.5.9		S.5.10		S.6.2		TOTAL
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	
1-10	(39)	(29)	(15)	7	(53)	(36)	12	(18)	(65)	(44)	(99)	(59)	7	(10)	(48)	(57)	2	4	(50)	(39)	(693)
11-20	15	20	9	3	28	31	(16)	9	25	41	35	42	(7)	2	27	40	1	0	29	20	400
21-30	14	9	5	3	15	12	5	7	14	11	10	20	2	1	16	13	2	2	8	9	178
31-40	4	4	2	2	6	4	4	1	5	8	8	15	1	1	8	4	1	1	4	7	90
41-50	0	4	1	4	3	9	3	3	2	2	2	4	2	0	6	2	1	1	3	5	57
51-60	3	3	3	3	1	6	2	3	1	3	0	7	2	4	5	1	4	2	0	4	57
61-70	2	3	0	2	0	6	1	1	2	0	1	1	1	1	3	1	0	1	1	2	29
71-80	2	2	0	1	0	2	2	1	1	3	0	4	1	0	0	2	1	0	1	5	28
81-90	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	2	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	2	16
91-100	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	9
>100	4	8	1	(9)	2	0	7	8	1	2	0	0	5	9	5	0	(10)	(10)	1	4	86
Total	83	83	37	36	109	108	53	52	117	116	156	155	29	29	121	120	22	22	97	98	1643

Table 16. Distribution of words per turn for all speakers. Circled frequency values correspond to modes.

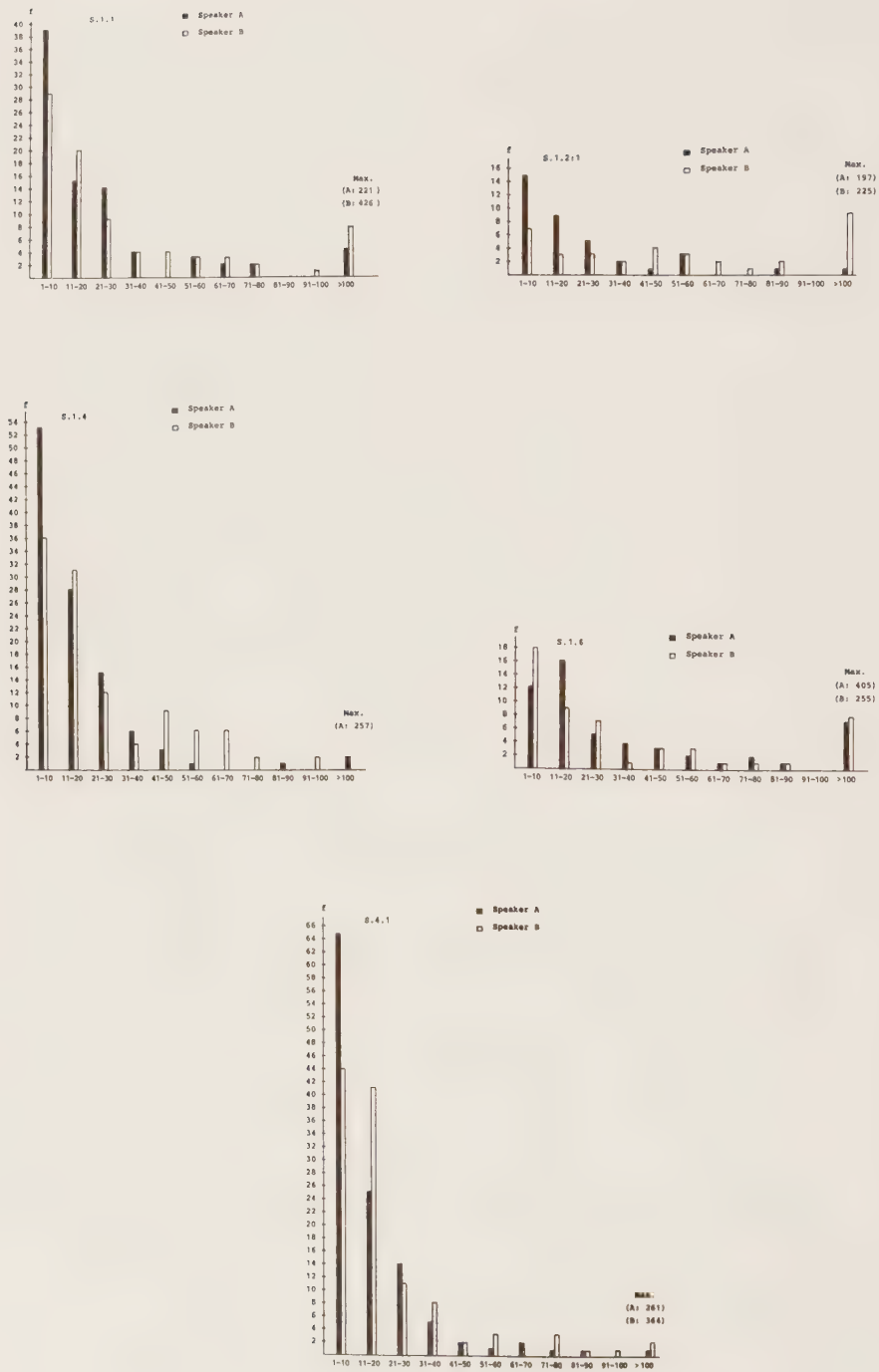


Table 17a. Distribution of words per turn for the individual speakers. The first five conversations.

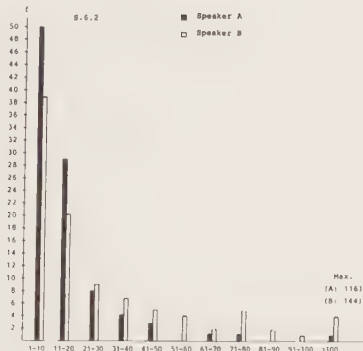
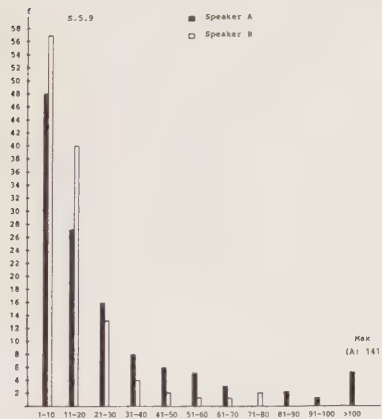


Table 17b. Distribution of words per turn for the individual speakers. The last five conversations.

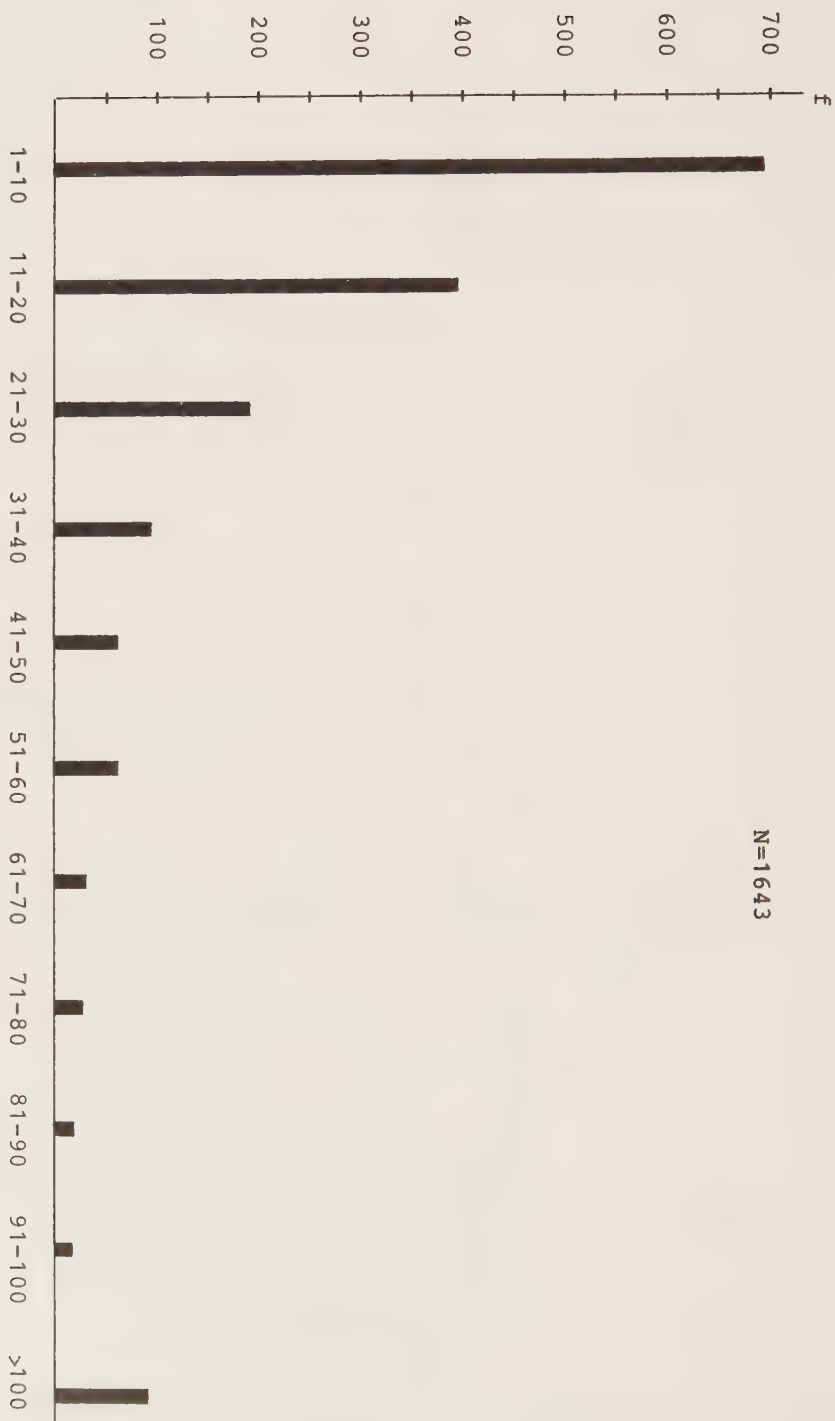


Table 18. Pooled values of words per turn for all conversations.

Conversation

Turn length in words	S.1.1		S.1.2:1		S.1.4		S.1.6		S.4.1		S.4.2		S.5.8		S.5.9		S.5.10		S.6.2		TOTAL
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	
1-10	47.0	34.9	40.5	19.4	48.6	33.3	22.6	34.6	55.6	37.9	63.5	38.1	24.1	34.5	39.7	47.5	9.1	18.2	51.5	39.8	42.2
11-20	65.1	59.0	64.9	27.8	74.3	62.0	52.8	51.9	76.9	73.3	85.9	65.2	48.3	41.4	62.0	80.8	13.6	18.2	81.4	60.2	66.5
21-30	81.9	69.9	78.4	36.1	88.1	73.1	62.3	65.4	88.9	82.8	92.3	78.1	55.2	44.8	75.2	91.7	22.7	27.3	89.7	69.4	77.4
31-40	86.7	74.7	83.8	41.7	93.6	76.9	69.8	67.3	93.2	89.7	97.4	87.1	58.6	48.3	81.8	95.0	27.3	31.8	93.8	76.5	82.8
41-50	86.7	79.5	86.5	52.8	96.3	85.2	75.5	73.1	94.9	91.4	98.7	90.3	65.5	48.3	86.8	96.7	31.8	36.4	96.9	81.6	86.3
51-60	90.4	83.1	94.6	61.1	97.2	90.7	79.2	78.8	95.7	94.0	98.7	94.8	72.4	62.1	90.9	97.5	50.0	45.5	96.9	85.7	89.8
61-70	92.8	86.7	94.6	66.7	97.2	96.3	81.1	80.8	97.4	94.0	99.4	95.5	75.9	65.5	93.4	98.3	50.0	50.0	97.9	87.8	91.5
71-80	95.2	89.2	94.6	69.4	97.2	98.1	84.9	82.7	98.3	96.6	99.4	98.1	79.3	65.5	93.4	100	54.5	50.0	99.0	92.9	93.2
81-90	95.2	89.2	97.3	75.0	98.2	98.1	86.8	84.6	99.1	97.4	100	99.4	79.3	69.0	95.0	100	54.5	54.5	99.0	94.9	94.2
91-100	95.2	90.4	97.3	75.0	98.2	100	86.8	84.6	99.1	98.3	100	100	82.8	69.0	95.9	100	54.5	54.5	99.0	95.9	94.8
>100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 19. Cumulative frequencies in per cent of words per turn for all speakers. Figures below the line denote classes with frequency values >50%.

OVERALL

Conversation																			OVERALL MEAN	
S.1.1		S.1.2:1		S.1.4		S.1.6		S.4.1		S.4.2		S.5.8		S.5.9		S.5.10		S.6.2		
A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	
23.7	43.1	24.0	66.9	18.3	23.6	45.5	47.6	16.7	23.1	11.5	20.9	58.2	110.6	24.8	14.5	100.7	102.8	15.8	27.7	28.2

S.1.1		S.1.2:1		S.1.4		S.1.6		S.4.1		S.4.2		S.5.8		S.5.9		S.5.10		S.6.2	
A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
220	425	196	224	256	95	404	254	260	363	61	92	369	916	140	77	390	283	115	143

Conversation

S.1.1		S.1.2:1		S.1.4	S.1.6	S.4.1	S.4.2	S.5.8	S.5.9	S.5.10	S.6.2
A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
15.5	15.5	15.5	45.5	15.5	15.5	5.5	15.5	25.5	15.5	55.5	15.5

Table 22. Medians of words per turn for all speakers (class mid-marks).

Conversation

S.1.1		S.1.2:1		S.1.4	S.1.6	S.4.1	S.4.2	S.5.8	S.5.9	S.5.10	S.6.2
A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
10	20	10	35	10	15	5	10	25	10	>35	5
											15

Table 23. Quartile deviation of words per turn for all speakers.

find that the median for the whole material is to be found in the second class (11-20).⁸

Table 23 gives the quartile deviation for the speakers. The variability appears to be small for the majority of the speakers, most of them having short turns. Great variability was found for four speakers (Speaker B in S.1.2:1 and S.5.8 and both speakers in S.5.10).

Sex

Of the 20 speakers in the whole material, 13 were males and 7 females (see Table 2 and Appendix II). There were, in all, 1643 turns, 1042 by males and 601 by females. The total number of words in turns was 46,297, 30,058 of these by males and 16,239 by females. The females made up 35% of the speakers and they also accounted for 35.1% of all produced words (expected value for the female speakers is 16,204).

For 16 of the speakers, of whom 10 were males and 6 females, the mode was earlier found to be 1-10 words. Among the remaining four speakers, all the three males had modes >100 and the female 11-20. Thus, no female speaker had the mode >20 words.

The overall mean of turn length was earlier found to be 28.2 words (Table 20). The males had 28.8 and the females 27.0 (cf Duncan & Fiske 1977:69, who report on somewhat longer turn length in time for the male speakers).

However, although the total number of delivered words in turns was almost fully relative to both sexes, some small differences were found concerning the distribution of turn lengths. Table 24 gives the observed and expected values for each class as regards sex of speaker. Expected values have been calculated in the following way:

$$\frac{\text{the product of the marginal totals}}{N \text{ (the total number of observations)}}$$

It appears that the males had somewhat fewer short turns (1-20), a few more of the medium-length turns (31-70), and more also of the very long turns (>100). In the five mixed-sex dyads, no clear patterning was discernable.

O: observed value
E: expected value

	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-100	>100	TOTAL
Males												
O:	425	239	127	57	41	41	22	15	11	5	59	1042
E:	440.8	253.7	112.9	57.1	36.2	36.2	18.4	17.8	10.2	5.7	54.5	
Females												
O:	268	161	51	33	16	16	7	13	5	4	27	601
E:	254.2	146.3	65.1	32.9	20.8	20.8	10.6	10.2	5.8	3.3	31.5	
Total												
O:	693	400	178	90	57	57	29	28	16	10	86	1643

Table 24. Observed and expected values as regards length of turns in words for male and female speakers.

Age

The age of the 20 speakers ranged between 21 and 60. Age is more problematic to handle since it is, unlike sex and manner of recording, a continuous variable. A further problem is that the information about the speakers' age in the LLC is often approximate (see Appendix II). In order to set up groups on the basis of age, the dyads were divided into same-age (difference <10 years) and mixed-age (difference >10 years) ones (Table 2). Of the 10 dyads, 6 represent same-age and 4 mixed-age constellations. In the mixed-age dyads there were in all 777 turns, 388 by the older speakers and 389 by the younger ones. Of the total number of words in the mixed-age dyads, 19,717, 10,758 (54.6%) were emitted by the older speakers and 8959 (45.4%) by the younger ones.

No relevant differences could be seen as regards modes. The overall mean of turn length was 28.2 words, the older speakers had 27.7 and the younger ones 23.0.

Table 25 gives the observed and expected values for each class for the mixed-age dyads. It appears that the older speakers had somewhat fewer of the shortest turns (1-10).

Manner of recording

The material contains two clearly distinct groups of dyads in terms of the manner of recording: 4 surreptitious (Group I) and 6 non-surreptitious ones (Group II; see Table 2). There is reason to believe that people speak differently depending on the manner of recording. As in Bowman (1966:6), there were a few jokes about 'watching one's language' in the conversations of Group II in my material:

- (14) B *we should bring Dilys along she'd talk the head off the tape-recorder*
 A *I think you're more conscious of it than I am*
 B *why*
 A *you just seem to be the way you say things*
 B *I'm not actually ... I think you're aware of it because there's your your language is slightly more precise*

(Contd on p. 101)

O: observed value
E: expected value

	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-100	>100	TOTAL
Older O:	150	107	42	27	14	12	6	9	3	2	16	388
E:	172.3	92.9	40.9	23.5	12.0	11.0	6.0	8.5	3.0	2.0	16.0	
Younger O:	195	79	40	20	10	10	6	8	3	2	16	389
E:	172.7	93.1	41.1	23.5	12.0	11.0	6.0	8.5	3.0	2.0	16.0	
Total O:	345	186	82	47	24	22	12	17	6	4	32	777

Table 25. Observed and expected values as regards length of turns in words for older and younger speakers in mixed-age conversations.

O: observed value
E: expected value

	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-100	>100	TOTAL
Group I	O: 209	131	70	27	27	24	15	10	6	3	39	561
	E: 236.6	136.6	60.8	30.7	19.5	19.5	9.9	9.6	5.5	3.1	29.4	
Group II	O: 484	269	108	63	30	33	14	18	10	6	47	1082
	E: 456.4	263.4	117.2	59.3	37.5	37.5	19.1	18.4	10.5	5.9	56.6	
Total	O: 693	400	178	90	57	57	29	28	16	9	86	1643

Table 26. Observed and expected values as regards length of turns in words for speakers in surreptitious (Group I) and non-surreptitious (Group II) conversations.

- A *no I don't think this is true I don't think mine is
more precise mine's more more slurred for a start unless*
- B *no I don't mean that no I I mean your choice of language
is slightly more considered* (S.4,1; 69-72)

Of the total number of words (46,297), 18,263 were produced by Group I and 28,034 by Group II. Group I made up 40% of all dyads and accounted for 39.4% of all words in turns. Group I was found to have fewer short turns and more turns of medium-length and more very long turns compared with Group II (Table 26). The chi-square was 22.99, $df=9$, $p < .01$.

5.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the length of speaking-turns was measured by the number of produced words for all speakers in the material. Only non-overlapping turns were studied. In spite of great variations, both concerning the total number of turns and the total number of uttered words among the speakers, the number of produced words per turn for the speakers showed much greater homogeneity. Since each form of central tendency gives a different conception of average, three have been accounted for here: mode, mean, and median. The results of words per turn for the speakers can be summarized as follows:

Mode

- 16 of the 20 speakers (80%) had 1-20 words
- 17 of the 20 speakers (85%) had 1-30 words

Mean

- 12 of the 20 speakers (60%) had 1-30 words
- 15 of the 20 speakers (75%) had 1-50 words

Median

- 15 of the 20 speakers (75%) had 1-20 words
- 16 of the 20 speakers (80%) had 1-30 words

Thus, the overall central tendency appears to be that the values clustered around 1-20 words. It is not possible, of course, to

say exactly where the borderline lies between short and long turns. Turn length is a scale with shorter turns at one end and longer ones at the opposite extreme and with an indefinite number of turns of medium-length in between. Judging from the results of the central tendency, turns in the present conversations were comparatively short, generally 30 words, at the most, often shorter (overall mean value 28.2). Very long turns, >100 words, occurred infrequently and made up 5.2% of all turns. A speaking-turn was also found to contain 5.2 TUs and a TU 5.1 words, on an average. This may show that turn length is another factor that distinguishes conversation from debate.

When related to the extra-linguistic variables, turn length displayed some correlation with manner of recording. The surreptitiously recorded dyads had fewer short turns and more turns of medium-length and more very long ones. Males did not take up a higher proportion of conversational space than did women as judged by the number of produced words.

Notes

- 1 The TU numbers in brackets in this chapter all refer to the text sample in Fig. 12.
- 2 *m* and variants serving as back-channel items are not included in this study. The only instances of these that are counted are when they function as answers to a question which then is regarded as a turn. This difference can be exemplified by *yeah* in Fig. 12 where TU 19 is classified as a back-channel item but TU 33 as an answer and a turn.
- 3 The definite article in the LLC is rendered orthographically when it has its short regular form but is transcribed phonetically when it has a deviant form (cf TUs 14 and 42 in Fig. 12).
- 4 Note that Conversation S.1.2:1 is shorter in length than the others (Table 2).
- 5 Length of turns in terms of TUs will be found in Appendix III.
- 6 Single-word turns made up 10.5% of all turns in class 1-10, ranging between 0 and 33.3% among speakers.

- 7 Overall mean of TUs per turn was 5.2 and overall mean of words per TU was 5.1.
- 8 The exact median was 13 words.

6 Listener activity

*All speech, written or spoken,
is a dead language, until it finds
a willing and prepared hearer*

R.L. Stevenson

6.1 INTRODUCTION

So far, the discussion has mostly centered around the speaker activity, leaving the listener aside. But while the speaker is talking, the listener is not passive but is simultaneously expressing both verbal and non-verbal reactions without actually taking over. As stated in section 2.3, utterances can be divided into turns, which are produced by a person who is taking the speaker role, and back-channel items (BCs), emitted by a person who is taking the listener role. A BC was described as a brief, spontaneous reaction to the content of the speaker's turn supplying him with direct feedback. It signals continued attention, agreement, and various emotional reactions, thereby indicating that the communicative contact is still maintained, that speaker and listener are 'on line'. Although having little information value as regards content (they do not, for example, advance the topic), the BCs are important contributions as they help to sustain the flow of interaction. It is part of the listener role to communicate in the back channel by emitting appropriate reactions to the speaker's message in order to show that he is an active listener and an interested partner. It belongs to his role not only to answer questions but also to laugh at jokes, to signal continued attention, acceptance, surprise, etc. This is contained in the 'conversational bond' (Allen & Guy 1974:12). There are mutual expectations as to cooperation concerning such underlying conditions for linguistic interaction.¹



Fig. 13. Speaker's turn and listener's BC (dotted).

These feedback signals have been termed differently: 'signals of continued attention' (Fries 1952:49), 'accompaniment signals' (Kendon 1967:41), 'listener responses' (Dittmann & Llewellyn 1968), 'listener turns' (Markel 1975:190).

Together, the interactants are building a conversation, alternating as speaker and listener, between action and reaction, between foreground and background activity. The feedback signals have a positive effect here and contribute at the same time to the achievement of consensus between the participants.² The speaker continues in his role as long as he receives acceptance from the listener manifested in these positive reactions. A BC therefore serves as a 'go on' signal. By the emission of a BC, the listener expresses both a confirmation that he will remain in the listening-mode and 'permission' for the other to continue.³

Henne (1978:124) points out that communication does not exist only under ideal listener conditions. He divides the listening activity into three types based on different degrees of attention and interest from the listener:

Active listener: listening ('obedient')

Passive listener: silent and not listening ('disobedient')

Simulating listener: only pretends to be attentive and interested but is, for example, unprepared to take the turn

An example of the simulating listener, who is speaking without really communicating, would be a parent busy cooking or reading and mechanically saying *mm* and *yes* at regular intervals to a chattering child giving the impression of being an active listener. A simulating listener using *yes* in the wrong place (eg as a response to a negative statement) is soon revealed as a cheat.

6.2 METHOD

Types of back-channel items

In this chapter, various aspects of the listener's verbal activity will be studied, such as formal, functional, contextual, and temporal ones.

Duncan & Niederehe (1974:236) include among the BCs the following contributions from the listener:

- a) *m-hm, yeah, that's right*, etc. including also kinesic signals
- b) Sentence completion; the listener completes a sentence that the speaker has begun:
 S: ... *eventually, it will come down to more concrete issues* ...
 A: *As she gets more comfortable*
- c) Brief restatement; the listener "restates in a few words an immediately preceding thought expressed by the speaker":
 S: ... *having to pick up the pieces*
 A: *the broken dishes, yeah*
- d) Request for clarification; "such requests were usually accomplished in a few words or a phrase":
 S: ... *somehow they're better able to cope with it*
 A: *You mean these anxieties, concern with it?*

It seems doubtful, however, whether requests for clarification are to be classified as BCs as they have the effect of directly influencing the subject matter and the stream of talk and are very close to ordinary question/answer paired turns. In the present study they are treated as speaking-turns.

When setting up the two categories, turns versus BCs, they found that "This general picture was complicated, however, by the observation in our conversations that for some of the longer back channels, particularly the brief restatements, the boundary between back channels and speaking turns became uncertain" (p.237).

Henne (1978:125) gives a list of signs and combinations of signs that are linked with the listener role, from visual (gestures, nods, and eye glances), non-linguistic signs (*hm, ts*), lexical signs (*yes, OK, right*), idioms (*I see*) to sentence completions.

In the present study of the BCs, Duncan & Niederehe's classification of the listener's verbal reactions will be used (except for 'requests for clarification'). The types of such listener reactions subject to study here are:

Supports: *m, mhm, yes, yeah, right, OK, fine, I know, that's right, I see, etc.*

Exclamations: *oh, gosh, God, good God, bloody hell, etc.*

Exclamatory questions: *what, really, did he, was it, etc.*

Sentence completions	}	(for examples, see above)
Restatements		

Fig. 14. Types of verbal back-channel items.

Supports express acceptance, agreement, and/or that the listener has understood the message. Exclamations are purely emotional expressions, like surprise, and exclamatory questions are a mixture of exclamations and questions.

Both *yes* and *no*, for example, have different functions, such as answers to questions, objections to assertions, and supports to assertions:

(15)	QUESTION/ ANSWER	ASSERTION/ OBJECTION ⁴	ASSERTION/ SUPPORT
A	<i>is this true</i>	A <i>this is not true</i>	A <i>this is true</i>
B	<i>yes</i>	B <i>yes</i>	B <i>yes</i>
A	<i>is this true</i>	A <i>this is true</i>	A <i>this is not true</i>
B	<i>no</i>	B <i>no</i>	B <i>no</i>

As this chapter is devoted to the listener's back-channel activity, it is necessary, before we proceed to study the BCs in more detail, with a methodological discussion of which items that should be regarded as answers to questions (turn-taking relation) and supports to assertions (no turn-taking relation). To do so, we will have to examine the complex nature of assertions and elicits.

Assertions and elicits

From one point of view, speaking-turns could be divided according to their discourse function into two main groups: Assertions and Elicits. By 'assertion' is meant here an utterance the general purpose of which is to *give* information (speaker A informs speaker B). An assertion is normally realized through positive (*they arrived yesterday*) or negative declarative form (*I couldn't see him*). An elicit, on the other hand, is an utterance the purpose of which is to *extract* information (speaker A wants speaker B to inform him). This give-and-take distinction between turns could be illustrated with a figure:

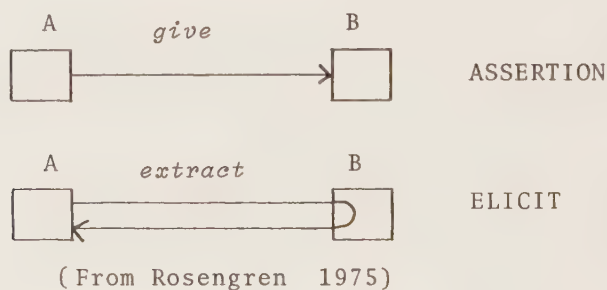


Fig. 15. Two types of turns.

An elicit is a question or a command often having interrogative or imperative form, respectively (*will you be here tomorrow, let me know what's wrong*). But not infrequently it has declarative form (*you still live in York, you didn't tell me about your trip*) with or without accompanying specific 'elicit intonation'.⁵ We could say that when a person introduces an elicit in the course

of the conversation, a new 'state' is also introduced, namely a request for immediate partner action. The listener's job will be to interpret correctly what he hears in terms of assertions or elicits, since asking someone a question is shuffling a commitment onto that person to cooperate by responding. It is a social obligation to answer a question contained in the conversational bond. An assertion, on the other hand, does not contain any explicit element which obliges the partner to respond in a particular way. On the surface, this would leave it more open to him when deciding whether to take the turn or remain listener after a completed assertion from the speaker. However, as will be discussed later in this chapter, a closer look at the problem will suggest that from an interactional perspective this sharp distinction between assertions and elicits is often an oversimplification. Generally in conversation, assertions also are linked with some sort of response-seeking and are thus subordinated to principles of human communication.

It is now a commonplace observation that form and function are not in a one-to-one relationship and that the internal linguistic structure of an utterance is therefore often insufficient information as regards the function of it. This fact underlies Labov's (1972:121) basic principle in discourse analysis: "to distinguish *what is said* from *what is done*". He gives three simple examples of utterances which are formally different but functionally equivalent in the sense that they all express a request for information:

- (16) *I would like to know your name.*
What is your name?
Tell me your name!

For all these three expressions there are various alternatives for how the same speech act can be formally expressed (*I don't know your name, you didn't tell me your name, can you tell me your name, what did you say your name is, give me your name, your name, name, etc.*). Lakoff (1973) argues that the choice of particular form has to do with degree of politeness.⁶ Further, identical utterances can have pragmatically different or even opposite functions depending on, for instance, their location in the

discourse. When *nice to meet you* is uttered initially in an encounter between two people, it will serve as an opener of the conversation but when uttered again later in the same conversation, it will serve as a closer. As the real function of an utterance is often not revealed in its form, it is obvious that it is instead the intention behind it that we interpret. An individual who interprets *Can you tell me the time?* as a yes-no question "would find the world a bewildering place full of irritable people" (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975:28).

Since many utterances are not self-revealing as regards their function, they will start different interpretation processes in the listener in order for him to arrive at the intended meaning. To solve this, the interactants have a set of various pragmatic rules for interpretation and they draw logical conclusions from the situational context. Labov (1972:124) has presented a number of such rules on which people base the strategies they use in order to arrive at a correct decoding (as intended by the speaker) of what they are exposed to. In cases of doubt, they select the interpretation that seems most reasonable to them. This task of making plausible interpretations will occupy their minds throughout the discourse and is part of their job as cooperative partners (Grice 1975). Labov claims that the interpretation of an utterance, shaped as a statement, into a request for information depends on the concept of shared knowledge. He classifies all reported events as:

- A-events; events that A knows about, but B does not
- B-events; events that B knows about, but A does not
- AB-events; events that are known to both

"If A makes a statement about a B-event, it is heard as a request for information."

Imagine the following scene:

- (17) A family are having dinner.
 For some reason, one of them
 is eating in the garden while
 the rest are sitting in the
 kitchen.
 The window is open.
 Suddenly the mother shouts
 without looking up:

you liked it
 and presently gets:
yes very
 from the garden.

The following has then happened:

- 1 The problem of identifying the addressee (*you*) is solved in the way that the raised voice serves as a signal that selects the next speaker, ie the addressee must be at a distance away from the speaker otherwise there would be no need for the raised voice. We raise our voice for a distant listener and lower it for one that is near. Higher volume serves as an 'addressee-selecting signal'.
- 2 The problem of identifying the referent (*it*) is solved by the situational context. By introducing a pronoun as in the example, instead of specifying the referent more closely, the addresser is indirectly signalling that the referent must be well-known to both of them, existing in the immediate situation.⁷
- 3 The problem of identifying the speech act as an elicit is solved with the help of Labov's rules for interpretation (here B-event). It is highly unlikely that it will be interpreted as an assertion as "we do not normally go round telling people what they already know" (John Sinclair, personal communication).⁸

With the help of three different and correctly drawn conclusions, the dinner people in the example have been shunted onto the right track and the intended function has successfully been conveyed.⁹

Leech & Svartvik (1975:110ff and 283) bring up the problem of how information is given, received, and responded to. There are three types of questions with interrogative form:

- (18) yes-no question
 (usually with rising intonation) *Will they be coming?*
- (19) wh-question
 (normally with falling intonation) *Where do you live?*

(20a) tag question

*The boat has lèft,
hàs'n't it?*

(20b) tag question

*Nobody was wàtching
me, wère they?*

Tag questions are "shortened *yes-no* questions added to a statement" (p. 284) and they "ask for confirmation of the truth of the statement" (p. 112). This, however, is only partly true. While *yes-no* questions and *wh*-questions normally require a response, this is not always so with tag questions. Quirk et al (1972:391) discuss this and give the two examples *he likes his jòb, dóesn't he?* and *he doesn't like his jòb, dóes he?* yielding the following four possible forms when intonation is taken into account:

- positive stàtement + negative tág
- positive stàtement + negative tàg
- negative stàtement + positive tág
- negative stàtement + positive tàg

Quirk et al claim that the tag question "invites the listener's response to it" but also that there is a shift of meaning depending on the intonational patterning. The tag with a falling tone expresses a weaker invitation for a response and "invites confirmation of the statement, and has the force of an exclamation rather than a genuine question".¹⁰ Consider the following examples:

- (21) B *but they /have no 'centre 'space that's :frée {/dò
they#}#*
 A */ē:m# well I /didn't see e'nough òf it# . to to .
de/termine the 'actual 'strùcture# (S.5.9; 5)*
- (22) B */oh I 'see you :go the bàck way# /don't you# .*
 A */m#*
 B */[yès} I go :round the !back of the flàt# (S.4.2; 42)*
- (23) A */oh yès# it /ís a hòuse 'hold 'god of sóme 'sort#
/ìsn't it# /I should !thìnk# or /is it a ":dàncer# I
don't /knòw# it's got an e/{nòrmous} bēlly# (S.1.6; 71)*

The three examples represent three different functions of the tag question, respectively:

- 1 Turn-yielding; the speaker gives up his turn and lets the listener take over¹¹
- 2 Confirmation-seeking; the speaker wants a brief confirmation before he proceeds¹²
- 3 Filler; the tag has lost its elicit function and is used as a device that increases the social contact.¹³

As regards the last function, filler, Quirk (1955:178f) refers to this use as an 'intimacy signal':

since the desire to feel that the hearer is *sharing* something with one seems to be fundamental in the urge to speak, these sharing devices, these intimacy signals in our everyday talk, are of considerable importance.

Only the first two of the three tag questions, which all have falling intonation, appear to be response-seeking. The last one solely reinforces or tries to reinforce existing consensus.

Tag questions contain an inherent ambiguity and, consequently, the degree of interrogative force is not always clear to the listener. There are occasional clashes when the listener misreads the speaker's intention. A listener, for example, may interpret a tag question as turn-yielding whereas the speaker only meant it to be confirmation-seeking or a filler and is therefore unwilling to yield the turn:

- (24) B *be/cāuse . ə:m# it's /just an'other 'sort of "!'prèssure# /isn't it# *I /mēan# . /if you /if you /if you 'feel**
 A **it /is# . and there are e/nòugh 'pressures thère#* /after !àll#*
 B *there /àre you sée# and I /think ə:m . in 'life [i] . in !!gèneral# (continues) (S.5.10; 72)*

In cases where the listener is uncertain of the intended function, he will be on the safe side if he emits a confirmation and then waits to see what will happen.

Quirk et al (1972:392) also mention the 'declarative question', "a type of question which is identical in form to a statement, except for the final rising question intonation". Leech & Svartvik (1975:112) say that by using a declarative question "You can strengthen the positive bias of a question":

(25) *You got home sáfely then?*

(26) *The guests have had something to éat?*

There are, however, a number of utterances with less overt or no interrogative form but which still have elicit function or close to that. In some cases, it is obvious that the utterance consists of an elliptical construction where the interrogative element has been omitted and where the elicitive nature of it is revealed by the rising intonation:

(27) A *ə:m - - De/laney's the Ca:nàdian . stúdent {re/mémber#}#*
/last yéar#

B */mhám#* (S.1.1; 5)

(28) A *it's /for five póunds# . /ríght#*

B */yès# m/hm#* (S.1.1; 45)

whereas in other cases there is no rising intonation. Two such types seem to be especially common here: check-ups and conclusions:

(29) B */oh yès# *[i] it was "/sò 'bad#**

A **and you /do "find you* /do 'feel that you're in an*
:aca'demic !àtmos'phere#

B */yès# .* (S.5.9; 39)

(30) B */m# I /used to wander 'round 'Russell :Squàre# [ð]*
/most of the tíme# .

A */ôh# . ə so you /know this 'area 'quite !wêll#*

B */yès#* (S.5.9; 67)

and expressions of uncertainty:

(31) B /January I sup:pose there :may be an :interview round
about Jànuary#

A /yèah# (S.1.1; 16)

(32) A I /wonder ((when)) [benə?] . 'when 'Berna'dette will
be arriv^hing# .

B I /don't !knòw# but she's /very 'welcome to come 'up
for a méal# - - - (S.4.1; 59)

(33) A I /don't know if you 'ever {wènt} to :Dòlomite's
'lectures# on /Whit*man#*

B *well* /they were 'more like !!sèrmons# his /lèctures#
(S.5.9; 79)

We have presumably conventionalized a fairly large number of expressions that have become frozen indicators of response-seeking and which therefore serve as interrogative substitutes. Examples are *and you ...*, *so you ...*, *you mean*, *you ...*, etc. which are conclusions drawn by the other of what the speaker just said and which seek out some kind of confirmation. This would mean that we have internalized an automatic translation (ie that the interpretation into elicit is not the result of an application of Labov's rules) of the set frame YOU + VERB + COMPLEMENTATION into DO/AUX + YOU + MAIN VERB + COMPLEMENTATION regardless of the intonational contour. *I suppose*, *I wonder*, *I don't know*, which express uncertainty and lack of knowledge, imply an invitation to the partner to be supplied with a confirmation or to hear his opinion. Both conclusions/check-ups and expressions of uncertainty are close to elicits as they prompt the other into a position where he feels a more or less strong expectation to respond. They seem to be common indirect ways of putting a question.

The really problematic ones are those utterances which have a declarative form with or without rising intonation generally butted in and consisting of one single TU. The analytic problem here is to decide whether to classify them as representing shared knowledge or known only to one of them (in Labov's terms A/B event and A-event and B-event, respectively). There are cases where it is impossible to tell whether an utterance having a

neutralized form is meant as an assertive comment or as a check-up elicited. The true interpretation rests on a thorough knowledge of the situational factors:

- (34) A /I was clòcking 'up a'bout# 'thirty-'five# /forty
 'quid a 'wèek# - and *ə:m*
 B *on /top* of your 'normal :sàlary# - -
 A ə: /nò# . /that was 'just for the wèek# (S.5.9; 56)
- (35) B /being the '[in] "/{only} 'person 'doing the :À Óption#
 - and de/cided she 'hàted it#
 A /this was at the be:ginning of the "'first *term#*
 B */yès#* (S.6.2; 82)
- (36) B /what is . has :happened 'since thēn# /is that there
 has been an'other meeting of the ex:ecutive com:míttee#
 at /which it was 'quite 'clear that :Mallet and :I did
 'not see eye to 'èye# . and /curiously enough on 'that
 occàsion# the */person*
 A */Steven* Peel sup'pòrted you# .
 B /yès# (S.1.2:1; 6)

In (35) and (36) there is no lead from the tonal patterning as there is in (34). However, in all three examples we can imagine ellipted elements in a broad sense, an ellipted initial *was that* in (34), an ellipted final tag *wasn't it* in (35) and an ellipted final tag *didn't he* in (36).

There is another group of words and expressions on the border between assertions and elicits. Although some of them have an overt interrogative form, they contain ambiguity as regards their pragmatic function because they are not always understood as true elicits. Formally, they are interrogatives but they serve rather as listener's exclamations. Sometimes they are followed by a response, sometimes not. A few examples:

- (37) A I /mean ((it)) was 'very 'kind#
 B /m# .
 A ə ə ə not /only {pro:vìded} - - - 'pöwer# but /he
 pro:vìded the 'càpital# /for - - - the wòrks# .
 B /oh 'dìd he# .
 A /m# . (S.4.2; 15)

- (38) B *I /heard his name :mentioned by - :Càrter# ((I /think#)) /by Dàrlington# /while I was !dòwn 'there#*
 - - -
 A */dìd 'you# - - -*
 B *I /think they've got quite a good o!pìnion of him# -*
 (S.1.1; 38)
- (39) B */and they re!sented the fàct that [?] we were .*
/fairly èdu'cated# and /much pre'ferred the
 A */rêally# .*
 B *oh /yès#*
 (S.5.9; 26)
- (40) A *there are /still# . /quite a lòt# who /are - - !put*
òut# - /if you 'talk a'bout 'sex
 B */rêally#*
 A *:òpenly# - I mean al/though 'in :gènèral# the*
/atmos'phere [i] is - - !{mòre} . 'open-ènded# .
 (S.5.10; 55)

Similar to these is *what* as single-word utterance which can be either a request for repetition or an expression of surprise or 'incredulity' (Quirk et al 1972:409). When such instances have no clear elicit function (ie when *what* does not mean 'what did you say' or 'what do you mean' judged by the fact that they are not responded to) they will be treated as exclamations and accounted for separately as 'exclamatory questions' in the statistics. One good reason for treating them as exclamations rather than elicits is given by Steedman & Johnson-Laird (1980:131) in their discussion of general assumptions. One such assumption is that "If you tell someone something, then they no longer don't know that something".

Finally, closely related to tag questions are *you know* and *you see* being either turn-yielders (41), confirmation-seekers, (42), or fillers (43):¹⁴

- (41) A *((and)) /you !came a'way :àfter'wards# and /thought*
now !what have I 'brought a'wày# you /know you !hàdn't#
/rêally# you'd /just en"!jòyed your'self# - well
/that's what I 'call 'being !tòò re'laxed# /you knów#
 B */there's a !man 'called :Mùrcot# . /who's a*
'mathe!màtics 'lecturer# (continues)
 (S.1.6; 84)

- (42) B /yèah# - /well cos he was there al!rèady# /you sée#
 A /yēah# (S.1.2:1; 49)
- (43) A I /méan# . to /have a 'student 'come to you and [s]
 - ((oh)) /I !read a bòok# and it's "/moved me so 'much
 I can't tàlk a'bout it# /you knôw# . "/{Î} should
 im":mèdiately 'say# "/phòney# be/cause ((!if it [h]))
 . /it 'had !moved him :sò 'much# (continues)
 (S.1.6; 37-38)

The frequency with which fillers like *you know*, *you see*, and tag questions are used is highly idiosyncratic. Some people use them so often that even their intimacy effect seems to have been lost and the listener does not respond to them for this reason:

- (44) B I /don't think 'I would 'want to 'live with a !còpy#
 ((which)) /yòu 'know# it's /lìke the orìginal# and
 /nòt 'like it# from /what I re!mēmber# I've /sèen# .
 you /knôw# [fəu] /coloured repro:dùctions of the
 o'riginal# in /àrt 'books# I /{knòw} it "is 'Innocent
 the :Fòurth I'm /sùre# - be/cause I ((you /knôw#))
 (continues) (S.1.4; 39)

Table 27 gives the distribution of *you know*, *you see*, and tag questions from Table 9 (Chapter 4) with information added about the nuclear tone. Of those which were followed by no verbal reaction from the partner, the ones uttered before new information had been presented (as revealed by their position in the discourse) which suggests turn-holding function (TH) have been accounted for separately (for examples, see footnote 14). The figures are too low to allow any definite conclusions. But they suggest that a falling tone does not specify function. When having a rising tone, *you know*, *you see* were most commonly followed by no verbal reaction and the tag questions by a turn from the partner. This indicates the possibility that a rising tone is generally understood as continuation when placed on *you know*, *you see*, but as termination when placed on a tag question.

	Followed by a turn	Followed by a brief confirmation	Followed by no verbal reaction		TOTAL
			TH	Ø	
<i>you knòw/sèe</i>	4	2	2	8	16
<i>you knów/sée</i>	9	5	10	28	52
<i>you knòw/sēe</i>	0	2	5	4	11
<i>you knðw/sěe</i>	0	0	1	1	2
<i>you know/see</i>	1	5	5	8	19
tàg Q	11	12	1	9	33
tág Q	7	2	0	2	11
tâg Q	1	0	0	0	1
Total	33	28	24	60	145

Table 27. The distribution of *you know*, *you see*, and tag questions related to type of nucleus and to partner reaction.

It is now time to sum up the discussion of assertions and elicits and try to relate them to communication in general. There seems to be no sharp line between elicits and assertions but the difference is often subtle. Various utterances put various degrees of pressure on the other participant to react. Stenström (forthcoming) discusses a scale from elicitive to assertive utterances. The analytic problem is that there exist utterances overtly marked as elicits but no utterances (apart from BCs and responses to elicits) that are overtly marked as non-elicits. In this study of the BCs, only such items as follow on non-elicits have been included. As elicits have been counted only those utterances that can be clearly interpreted as such. For lack of a reliable method to distinguish consistently between response-seeking versus no response-seeking function for those words and expressions discussed in this section, an *m*, *yes*, etc. following a tag question, or following a *you know*, *you see*, an exclamation, or an exclamatory question has been counted as a BC.

However, this problem should be seen from another angle as well. The reason why communication takes place at all, the reason why somebody says something to somebody else must be because he wants some kind of response in return. This is the essence of

human communication, that people pass over their messages to the other for reactions and comments. When something is said, there is normally an expectation that this something will be picked up and dealt with by the partner. The interactants are conscious of this social condition of conversation, which constitutes an 'overall context' for the utterances in the dialogue. What is made known does not exist '*in vacuo*' (Rommetveit 1974:58) but is related to the speech situation in which it appears. Generally speaking, there is in conversation, I will hypothesize, an implicit ubiquitous underlying response-seeking element in what is said, an element of 'do you see what I mean', 'what do you think', 'do you agree', as if there were a concealed tag question attached to the utterances. This element can be made more or less explicit by the speaker, from interrogative form to expressions of uncertainty or just finishing the speaking-turn and then looking up at and eyeing the other with or without a pause. All these means are powerful enough to indicate an act of response-seeking and the conversational bond is as strong here as in any explicitly expressed elicit. From this interactional point of view, there exist no 'pure' assertions but the utterances generally contain a hidden elicit. As a consequence of this, the interactants do not have to mold their messages in an overexplicit form but they can permit considerable manipulations without a loss of intention. This allows strategies of compression to be employed resulting in a more economical design of the form. There is no need for 'double-coding' as the overall context will disambiguate function with respect to assertion/elicit. Presumably, we have worked out a very artful means of compression in this respect. This use of compression may go back to Zipf's (1949:20f) idea of the economy of language and is also in line with Grice's (1975:46) maxim 'be brief'. The participants are able to express themselves precisely, saying just enough to get their messages through and the speech event, the context of situation, and the personal relationship between them will decide how far this compression can go. In an interview, an utterance from the interviewer is generally meant as a question regardless of form and a morning conversation between a married couple containing *I've just taken the last roll* can be enough to serve as a request to the other to buy some more.

Using compression is like marking out a trail with paper strips. There is little point in putting one strip for every meter but it should instead be located at certain essential places as a guidance for quick discovery by the runner. Rommetveit (1974: 29) claims that ellipsis "appears to be the prototype of verbal communication under ideal conditions of complete complementarity in an intersubjectively established, temporarily shared social world". Knowing that they are building a conversation together, the interactants are making an effort to cooperate in this enterprise by reacting meaningfully and appropriately to what they hear and also to apply relevant interpretations as regards the speaker's intended meaning. By doing this, they are also showing a willingness to retain the communicative contact.

6.3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Formal aspects

As regards distribution, a BC was found to occur singly ('simple') or in a series ('combined') where it was either repeated identically (eg *yes yes*) or in combination with another BC (eg *oh yes, m right, yeah I agree*). A simple BC was also found to constitute a separate TU and carry nuclear tone in practically all cases.

Table 28 presents the distribution of brief (single-word) simple supports, by far the largest group of BCs. The largest types were *m* and *yes*. It is not surprising that *m* made up half of all instances as it can be used as a response both to positive and negative statements.¹⁵ It also appears that 464 (65.0%) out of the total 702 instances were prosodically 'reduced', ie were uttered in piano/pianissimo, and/or had a nucleus with a narrow pitch range (width), and/or had a low pitch level. The most common type of reduction was loudness reduction (P) which was present in half (50.4%) of all instances and in 74.6% of all instances with only reduced features (ie among P, N, and L and their individual combinations). There were variations among the different individual types; 74.8% of *m* were reduced in at least one of the respects given above compared with only 58.4% for *yes*. The falling tone was the most common one (70.2%) and was also the

item	Ø	P	N	L	'reduced'				'increased'				'mixed'				TOTAL	TYPE TOTAL
					P+N	P+L	N+L	P+N+L	H	W	H+W	P+H	P+W	N+H	P+H+W	P+L+W		
m̃	54	77	26	8	45	2	6	11		1		1	2		1	1	235	353
m̄	2	8			3		1										14	
m̂	15	57		3		7			2								84	
â	8	2	2		2					1							15	
ñ	1	2	2														5	31
mhm̃	6	7															13	
mhm̄			1														1	
mhm̂					1												1	
m̃hm	1		2											1			4	238
m̄hm	1		2	1		1	3			1							9	
m̂hm	1	1	1														3	
yēs	64	26	25	9	33	4	2	4	2	1	2	2					174	
yēs	5	2	2	1	2		3		2		1						18	31
yēs	12	20		2		4			3		1						42	
yēs	4																4	
yēah	11	6	2	3				1									23	
yēah	1	1	1					1									4	2
yēah	1	1		1													3	
yēah	1																1	
yēp		1															1	
yēp			1														1	24
yēp		1															1	
nō	8	4	3	1	3	1				1		1					22	
nó	1																1	
nô	1																1	2
ahâ	1																1	
ahâ		1															1	
right					2												2	
alright	2																2	10
quite	8		2														10	
good		1				1											2	
chârmîng	2																2	
fantâstic			1														1	702
frightful			1														1	
Total	211	218	74	29	91	20	15	17	9	5	4	4	2	1	1	1	702	

Table 28. The distribution of brief, simple supports. Abbreviations: Ø = unmarked, speaker's normal, P = piano/pianissimo, N = narrow nuclear pitch width, L = low nuclear pitch level, H = high nuclear pitch level, W = wide nuclear pitch width.

most common one throughout. Level tone was found to be the second most common tone type (18.9%) and almost four times as common here compared with in conversation in general.

The relatively high figure for level tone deserves one further comment. According to Crystal (1969:150), behind a level tone there can be another tone whose range has been narrowed to such an extent that it is not wide enough to be interpreted in terms of fall or rise: "if narrowing goes too far, the nuclear tone is interpreted as level". It could therefore be argued that level tone here is often itself a form of reduction.

Rising tone made up only 7.0% which is almost three times rarer than the overall figure for this tone type. The relatively uncommon use of rising tone here could possibly be explained as an avoidance in order not to be understood as an elicit ('what did you say').

The males and the females had about the same number of delivered supports but some other sex differences were found here. The clearest one was for tone type of *yes* where level tone was more than three times rarer for females than for males. The females used falling tone instead. There are at least two possible explanations of this; either a strictly formal one, that the females simply used the full range of the tonal glide much more, or that they did not express boredom and indifference, which meaning the level tone is often said to convey. This would not necessarily mean that the females were more interested listeners than the males, only that their choice of tone may give this impression.

Other sex differences worth mentioning, although based on scanty data, are that the females used *mhm* (especially) and *yeah* much less often than the males; nor did they produce a single instance of the simple *quite*.

In addition to the brief simple supports, there were 74 instances of combined ones generally two or three consecutively. The individual items in such a series either constituted separate TUs or were in a prosodically subordinate relationship. As a rule, they also had the same tonal contour, as also noted by Bald (1980):

- (45) B *it's /very largely becâuse {he's /been bũilding# . ə:m
/this kind of perĩpheral 'thing#}# /in ((Áppleby#))
that it /hàs ((gone down#))*
A */yēs# /yēs# /yēs#* (S.1.2:1; 8)
- (46) B *he would /never ad'mit he was wrõng# .*
A */nò# . /nò# - /nò#* (S.1.6; 44)
- (47) A *I /mēan# if /this was 'something 'more :interesting to
":mè# I would "/have a pótrait#*
B */yès# /quĩte#* (S.1.4; 51)
- (48) B *and /that 'seems to mè# /that 'is 'quite big# -*
A */ {m} . yès# .* (S.4.2; 32)
- (49) A *no /Johnnie !Jònes# [wə] was /always 'very fònd of [əm]
- Carri.'bèan 'litera'ture#*
B */thàt's 'right# /yès# -* (S.5.9; 76)

Series of supports like these seem to reflect a greater degree of enthusiasm and possibly also a higher degree of agreement. However, a series also has another function. It can indicate the listener's raised interest in taking over the turn ('turn-claiming'), a way of 'queueing up' or 'negotiating' for the floor similar to a raised hand in the classroom. The listener is making it clear that he wants to give up reacting in the background and is ready to take the speaker role and will try to do so rather soon, at one of the nearest GBs. He may even just have 'taken off'. Dittmann & Llewellyn (1968) suggest that BCs can serve as such turn-requesting signals.

The items that appeared in these identically repeated series were *m*, *yes*, *yeah*, *no*. In series containing different items, (47), (48), and (49), there were all sorts of combinations except for *m* and *mhm* which have "less freedom of distribution" (Hirschman 1974). Such combined series numbered 121.

The long (more than a single word) simple supports (*I know*, *that's right*, etc.) were represented by only 23 instances altogether, most of them were prosodically reduced and had a falling tone.

EXCLAMATIONS	Ø	P	N	L	P+ N	H	W	F	H+ W	Total	TOTAL
God							1			1	} 26
gosh					1					1	
Christ	1									1	
Jesus	1									1	
oh	7	4	1	1					1	14	
oh dear	1									1	
good lord						1				1	
good God	1	1								2	
oh for God's sake	1							1		2	
good heavens	1									1	
bloody hell	1									1	
EXCLAMATORY QUESTIONS											
what	1									1	} 16
really	1					2	1		2	6	
Harry	1									1	
are you						1				1	
did you	1									1	
have you	1									1	
has he	2	1								3	
is it			1							1	
have they	1									1	
Total	22	6	2	1	1	4	2	1	3	42	42

Table 29. The distribution of the listener's simple exclamations and exclamatory questions. F = forte/fortissimo. For the rest of the abbreviations, see Table 28.

The distribution of simple exclamations and exclamatory questions can be seen in Table 29. Tone differences are not accounted for as there were so few instances but the most common one was fall. Only 10 out of 42 (23.8%) were prosodically reduced whereas the figure for the brief supports was 65.0%. Although simple exclamations were not produced in abundance as the supports were, they were common in combinations with other BCs, particularly *oh* (eg *oh yes*, *oh good*, etc.)

Finally, sentence completions (where the speaker is offered assistance with a word or a short sequence of words) and restatements in the material totalled 32 instances together. They generally appeared as simple and only a few cases of combined ones existed:

- (50) A *oh you could /see she was 'on the 'wàtch-'out# - - .*
 B **/yèah#**
 A **[iə* i] her /desperàtion# was in /direct pro'portion to her . +to to+*
 B *+(laughs) to her "/skìrts#+*
 A *to her !skìrts {/yès#}# .* (S.5.9; 15)
- (51) B */now ə I shall see you :ten o'clock on . Wednesday mōrning#*
 A */on Wednesday mōrning#* (S.1.1; 79)

There were also a fairly large number of speaking-turns (228 or 13.9% in the whole material) that started with *m*, *yes*, *yeah*, etc. When used as 'turn initiators', there was a difference in prosodic reduction compared with when they functioned as BCs. These turn initiators were reduced only in 44.3%.

Contextual aspects

One question that emerged was: where in the speaker's output were the BCs uttered and was there any pattern? To answer this question, the brief simple supports were selected and tested as to whether or not they tended to occur at a GB and/or with overlap (simultaneously with the speaker's output). The results will be seen in Table 30:

		at a GB	at a non-GB	Total
With overlap	O:	181	136	317
	E:	244.7	72.3	
Without overlap	O:	361	24	385
	E:	297.3	87.7	
Total		542	160	702

Table 30. Contingency table showing the proportion of brief, simple supports occurring at GBs and with overlap. Chi-square = 132.8, df=1, $p < .001$.

As is evidenced in the table, there was a tendency for the supports to be emitted at a GB and without overlap. 77.2% of them came at a GB and 53.5% without overlap.

The GB was earlier observed also to constitute the basic cue for turn-taking (Chapter 4). It makes up a transition-relevance place, ie it is here that the transition from listener to speaker is relevant. The GB is therefore of double interest as it is obviously a point towards which the listener orients himself whether he wants to change from listener to speaker or to emit a BC.¹⁶

It was also studied whether the supports tended to be uttered at certain GBs rather than others. It was hypothesized that an increased social contact tying the interactants together, like the mentioning of *I* and *you* and their variants would make the listener liable to respond. Brown (1977:122) mentions that by making his message tentative, eg *I think*, the other participant is invited to react. The relationship between GBs of a construction containing *I* or *you* and the execution of a support was studied but was abandoned after four conversations as no correlation could be found.

There were also two other uses of these supportive items which, although displaying low frequencies, are worth mentioning:

- as a response to a rhetorical question;

(52) B /how can 'I plèase these 'people#

A /yê#

(S.1.6; 35)

A rhetorical question is close to a statement and is sometimes responded to.

- as an 'apology';

- (53) B *you /could per'haps im:prove the hōuse but#*
 A **((/m̃ 'well#))**
 B **to /say* 'trans:plànt her# to an old /pěople's
 'home# /or 'to - /even to 'live with your !mòther#*
 A */well yès# she +/clearly couldn't :live with my
 !mòther# be/cause+*
 B *+((/might 'make her 'much [wə:])) . /yès#+*
 A *ə:m - - it would 'drive my 'mother !màd# (continues)*
 (S.5.8; 94-95)

In this example, *yes* meaning 'you talk' is used to regulate the interaction. It happens when they find each other talking at the same time and one of them gives up. This withdrawal is signalled by uttering *yes* thus confirming the return to the listener role. It took place when a person had switched from listener to speaker too hastily and was used as if he wanted to apologize and repair the violation before returning to the listener role (Oreström 1978 and Saario 1980). Here, it could be claimed that *yes* has a special meaning which is not a lexical but an interactional one.

Temporal aspects

Another aspect of the supports was studied, namely whether they appeared with any temporal regularity. The reason for this approach was the observation (Table 30) that nearly 1/4 of the supports did not come with any clear precision at a GB but in the midst of a construction and even before new information had been presented:

- (54) B *I shall "/not bē# a/way from home :thēn# un/tīl# at
 /àny rate# the /ènd of *-**
 A **/m̃#**
 B *a/bout the end of Àugust# - -* (S.1.1; 6-7)

The listener's reason for emitting a support like this could of course either be a late reaction to the sentence just before or that he had already been able to anticipate the intended message. But the supports nevertheless seemed to recur with relatively regular intervals.

To study this aspect, all speaking-turns of >30 words in the material were selected. These turns had a total of 372 (22.6%) of all speaking-turns. The distance between the supports in such turns was established by listening to the audio tapes and measured by the number of seconds. The distribution is given in Table 31. It appears that 43% are uttered with 6-10 seconds interval and that the listener is seldom silent for more than 15 seconds because of the 652 supports, 556 (85.3%) were uttered with 1-15 seconds interval. There were, in addition, 50 instances out of the total where there was no verbal support at all. These have not been included in Table 31. It is highly likely that the listener instead employed non-verbal supports during the long turns, particularly nods. A videotaped recording would answer such an assumption.

It is obvious from the figures that there exists a high degree of periodicity as regards the execution of the supports. There may well be a contributonal rule having a magnetic effect on the listener's emissions and pushing him to react within certain intervals. This rule would then be a demand on the listener not to remain inactive for too long. A support can be the minimum contribution that answers such a demand. It is also possible that there are other influencing factors activating this contributonal rule, such as an eye glance from the speaker.

We have seen earlier that the speaking-turns in this material were of relatively equal length (almost 8 out of 10 turns were between 1 and 30 words long). There also seems to be a time factor operating which makes the listener react with recurring regularity.

Abercrombie (1965:17) claims that speech is inherently rhythmical (for reasons of aspiration). One may also claim that conversational interaction is rhythmical but for reasons which have to do with the interaction itself and with the message transmission.

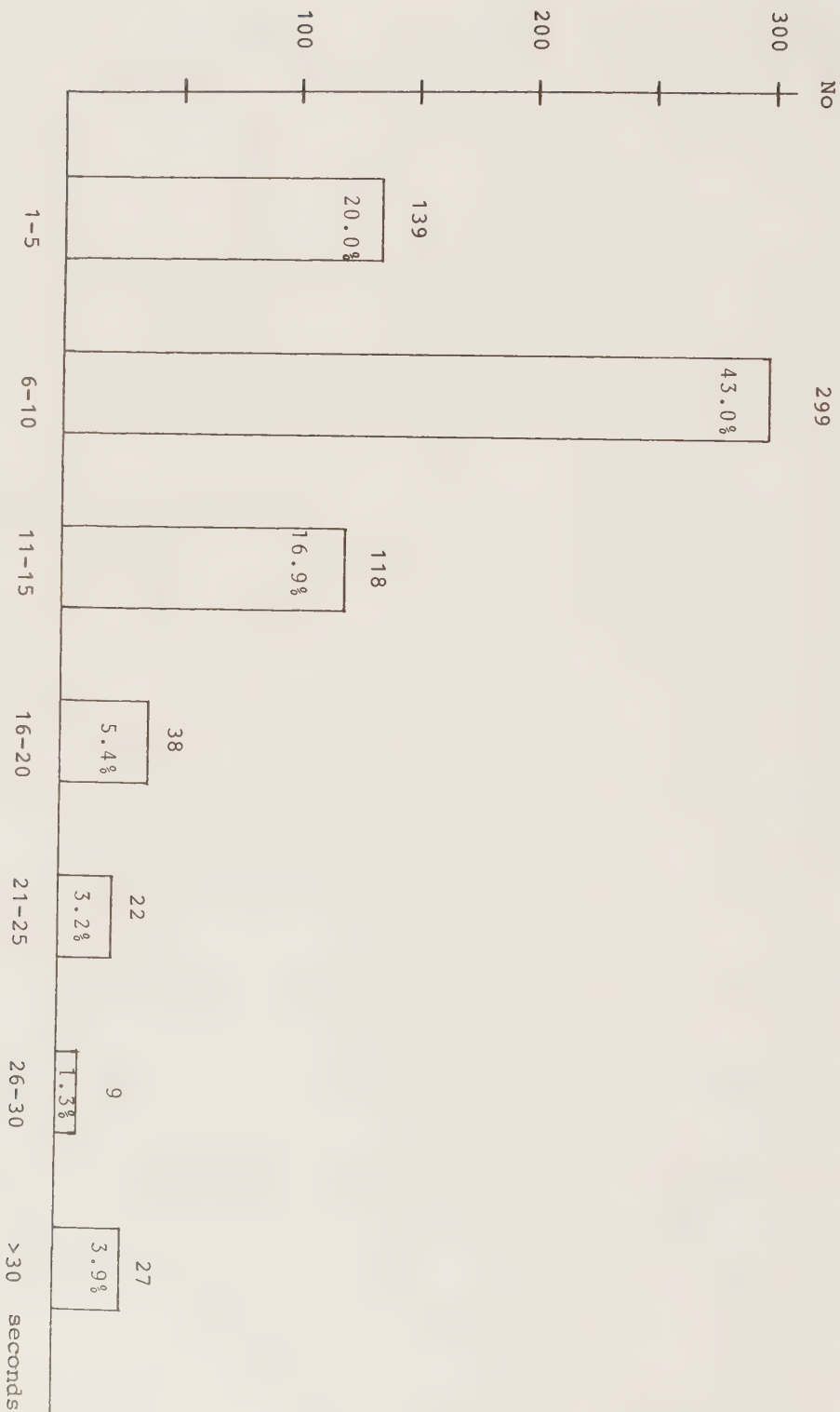


Table 31. Temporal distribution of the supports.

6.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the back-channel items were studied, ie those brief signals from the listener which express his spontaneous reactions to the speaker's message thereby supplying him with direct feedback (*m*, *yes*, *that's right*, etc.). These feedback signals are part of the listener role in conversation and are uttered without an intention to take the floor. Instead they confirm that the person continues to be in the listening-mode.

The most common type of BC was *m*, an item that can be legitimately uttered almost anywhere in the discourse and can serve as a response both to positive and negative statements. This type made up half of all the brief (single-word) instances. The BCs generally had a falling tone (70.2%); were prosodically reduced (65.0%), ie had a lower loudness than the person normally had, and/or a narrow nuclear pitch width and/or had a low pitch level, were emitted at a GB in the ongoing speaker's output (77.2%); and often overlapped with the partner's speech (46.5%). The second most frequently occurring nuclear tone was level tone which was three times more common among males than females.

The BCs also appeared as series either identically repeated or combined with a BC of another type. In such series, the individual items usually had the same tonal contour.

A difference in prosodic reduction was found for *m*, *yes*, *that's right*, etc. when used purely as a BC and when used as a turn initiator. In the latter case, they were reduced in 44.3%. The exclamations were reduced in only 23.8%.

No contextual patterns apart from the tendency to occur at a GB could be discovered. Instead there was a temporal periodicity with which they were emitted. Almost 8 BCs out of 10 came within 1-15 seconds interval.

Notes

- 1 Grice (1975) has brought together what he considers necessary conventions for successful communication. They are cooperative principles constituting maxims.
- 2 The use of this behaviour is different with adults and children. Dittmann (1972) found that children employ them far less often.
- 3 Jaffe (1958) and Dittmann (1972) mention that the use of *m*, *mhm* is a common, deliberate, and efficient technique used in psychiatric interviews. Gordon (1970:47ff) calls these elements 'door-openers' as they function as an invitation to talk and to say more.
- 4 *yes* and *no* as single-word utterances functioning as objections do not seem to be common judging by the frequencies in the present material. Generally, the speaker also gives the reason for his objection. Shields (1976:452) accounts for a similar observation for *no* as an answer to a question.
- 5 As commands with imperative form do not seem to be common in conversation, at least not in the present material, the discussion of elicits will concern questions.
- 6 According to Halliday (1973b:27), the relationship between form and function is much closer with young children:

The language system of the very young child is, effectively, a set of restricted language varieties; and it is characteristic of young children's language that its internal form reflects rather directly the function that it is being used to serve. What the child does with language tends to determine its structure.

This would mean that young children, simply because they have not participated in enough interactions, have not acquired the repertoire of alternative forms that can be used to express one and the same speech act. In the language of young children, form and function are therefore still largely 'congruent'. Gradually, the child learns to read between the lines, to perceive the intention beneath the form, which will enable it to understand an utterance like, for example, *you're not at home now* not as a simple piece of information but as containing a 'hidden imperative' (cf Crystal 1976:57), a command to behave in a certain way.

Sinclair & Coulthard (1975:32) note that there is a procedure for interpretation which can be phrased as follows:

Any declarative or interrogative is to be interpreted as a *command to stop* if it refers to an action or activity which is proscribed at the time of the utterance.

- 7 A purposeful way of alluding to people's shared knowledge is, for instance, The Beatles' song *Why Don't We Do It in the Road* and car stickers with *Divers Do It Deeper*.
- 8 Rising tone is not necessary here either, I believe.

- 9 Considering the discrepancy between form and function, there is no simple way for the analyst working retrospectively, of telling merely from the words that are at hand, what the intended speech act is. This is a problem inherent in the study of spoken interaction and brings a quotation to mind:

there are tears of sorrow and tears of joy, the clenched fist may signal aggression or constraint, a smile may convey sympathy or contempt, reticence can be interpreted as tactfulness or indifference ... Man, in his necessity to combine these two languages, either as sender or receiver, must constantly *translate* from one into the other, and in doing so encounters very curious dilemmas

(Watzlawick et al 1967:65f)

- 10 Lakoff (1972:918, footnote 8) points out that tag questions "are means of softening a declarative statement", a suggestion asking for agreement rather than a question and the tag question is therefore "intermediate between a statement and a question" (p. 917). Fraser (1980) notes that tag questions are devices of mitigation.
- 11 A tag question is the "generally available 'exit technique' for a turn" (Sacks et al 1974:718).
- 12 Some of this confirmation is given in the form of kinesic signals, particularly nods.
- 13 Further evidence of the filler function in example (24) is that the speaker does not leave room for confirmation as he does not even pause briefly after the tag question.
- 14 Depending on the position in the turn, *you know*, *you see*, and also tag questions can have the opposite function of turn-yielding:

(55) A /yēah# /I {/sēe#}# - /wèll# . ə:m ði ði the "/{òther thing} is you sēe# . /that . /if . you !hàven't 'got 'time# to /mark ((a)) paper (continues) (S.1.1; 11)

(56) B /course an!òther 'factor in ((disagrèement# /isn't it#)) is the /fact that a :thìrd# of the /whòle {of the de/pàrtment#}# (continues) (S.1.4; 54)

In these two examples, *you see* and *isn't it* receive no confirmation simply because there is nothing to confirm. New information has not yet been transmitted. Instead they either operate as fillers or, which is more probable, as turn-holding signals meaning 'listen to me now', 'I'm going to tell you something' (cf Wiemann & Knapp 1975:84 and Üstman 1981:26 for a similar view).

Another observation is that *you know*, *you see* seem to replace conjunctions expressing causal relationships and are a kind of 'post-positioned conjunctions', connectors serving as an alternative to *because*:

(57) B are you /going to come hóme 'first# - -

A /nò# . I've /got a shìrt in you sēe# (S.4.1; 33)

- 15 One may dwell a moment pondering over why *m* has taken this function in English as well as in many other languages. For one thing, *m* is one of the most common 'words' in everyday conversation (among the 15 most common ones in the present study, for example). Second, it is one of the first phonemes that the child learns to discriminate, even the first sound that is heard simultaneously with breastfeeding (Malmberg 1964:131ff). It is a primitive sound comparatively easy to produce (phonation with mouth closed, tongue in neutral position, nasal passage open). It is also easy to modulate for expressing various additional emotions and attitudes, like increased degree of enthusiasm, delight, etc.
- 16 Dittmann & Llewellyn (1967:342) report that the listener responses occur at the boundaries of phonemic clauses rather than within them. Duncan & Niederehe (1974:237) observed that "many of these auditor back-channels came at points in the midst of speaking-turns at which the auditor might legitimately claim the turn".

7 Simultaneous speech and interruption

*the thing about speaking
is to know when not to speak*
(S.2.8b; 23)

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Although one speaker at a time is a rule in conversation towards which the participants obviously orient themselves, speaker-shift is seldom, if ever, an entirely smooth process. The listener occasionally starts talking before the speaker has finished or breaks in, cuts off, and takes over in the midst of his partner's turn. However, the interactants generally try to see to it that the transitions from one speaker to another take place in a non-abrupt manner and they therefore try to avoid simultaneous speech and interruption. Moreover, it is a norm that is implanted early in life and is taught parallel to linguistic training. Young children are told 'don't interrupt' and 'wait your turn' (Shields 1976:452), and only after rather long practice do they master the turn-taking rules.

Much of the research in the field of simultaneous speech and interruption is done by sociologists and psychiatrists. Chapple & Lindemann (1942), who studied patients in psychiatric interviews, maintain that the 'stream of talk' should be used as one criterion when describing psychiatric disorders. They use interruption as a term for all kinds of simultaneous speech as well as for simultaneous non-verbal actions. Even if their concept of interruption is too broad for a fine-grained analysis, their study reflects a conviction that interruptive behaviour can be a sign of deficient interactional competence.

Wiens, Saslow & Matarazzo (1966), who also use the psychiatric interview for their studies in interruption, confine themselves to periods of simultaneous speech including, for example, interjections. They report that each of their subjects showed some simultaneous speech behaviour and that there was great in-

dividual variation. Besides, they note that the interviewer's speech and his interruptive behaviour can influence the interviewee's interruptive behaviour.¹

Kendon (1967), experimenting with two-person conversations, makes a distinction between interruptions which are caused by misinterpretation and those which arise when the listener tries to 'cut in' on the speaker's talking-time.

Meltzer, Morris & Hayes (1971:392) define interruption as "two persons vocalizing at once". Although aware that not all periods of simultaneous talk should be classified as real interruptions, for example, listener responses (*m*, *yes*, etc.), they still include them maintaining that these responses probably did not enter in any sizeable way in their experimental data.²

Clancy (1972) distinguishes between two types of interruption: those which cause broken-off, unfinished sentences on the part of the previous speaker and those in which the previous speaker completes his sentence while the new speaker is already beginning his.

Ferguson (1977) describes simultaneous speech and interruption in a study based on data drawn from spontaneous, experimentally unstructured conversations. Taking a similar view of the problem to that of Clancy (1972), she distinguishes between four types of 'speaker-switch non-fluency', three of which are called interruptions in the sense that there is a break in continuity:

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--|
| 1 | Simple interruption; | (simultaneous speech, ongoing speaker's utterance is incomplete, new speaker takes the floor) |
| 2 | Butting-in interruption; | (simultaneous speech, new speaker's utterance is left incomplete, no floor-taking) |
| 3 | Silent interruption; | (no simultaneous speech, ongoing speaker's utterance is incomplete, new speaker takes the floor) |
| 4 | Overlap; | (simultaneous speech, no apparent break in continuity, new speaker takes the floor) |

Ferguson mentions that "Additional material may indicate that supplementary categories are required" (p. 298). One example of such a new category would be when the new speaker's utterance is not left incomplete in the second type. An important aspect which

Ferguson's system does not account for is where in the ongoing speaker's output the new speaker enters, ie at a point of completion or non-completion. The present study will build on some of Ferguson's ideas but will also bring in more aspects, like point of entrance, type of contribution, and use of speed and loudness properties. It will also take speech disruptions into account.

7.2 METHOD

It is clear from what has been said in the introduction that earlier studies often take too broad a view of the phenomenon, equating indiscriminately all kinds of simultaneous talk with interruption. The net that was made to catch instances of interruption, and only these, is not properly woven. The need to adequately isolate interruption from other kinds of simultaneous talk is therefore apparent.

First, the concept 'interruption' has, undoubtedly, a negative connotation. We associate 'being interrupted' with an unplanned stop, hindrance, or disturbance caused by the intrusion of another person or an outside event.³ A relevant definition of interruption in conversation must therefore include both abrupt intrusion on the part of the new speaker and, as a result of the intrusion, hindrance or disturbance to the ongoing speaker. As a great number of the simultaneous turns do not fit this definition, we should be more careful when we use the word 'interruption'.

In making the necessary refined distinctions for a study of simultaneous speech and interruption in conversation, two factors, both evidenced linguistically, seem to be central:

- 1 If two or more people talk at once
- 2 If the new speaker starts talking before the ongoing speaker has reached a point of completion

By 'talk' is here meant 'talk in turn', ie BCs are not relevant. Following Duncan (1972:286) and Duncan & Fiske (1977:178), I will distinguish between 'simultaneous talking', which covers all kinds of joint talking, also BCs, and 'simultaneous turns', which imply simultaneous claiming of the turn. The distinction between turns and BCs is here a crucial one as the BCs are outside the

discussion of interruptions.

Any instance of speaker-shift where at least one of the two conditions given above (p. 137) is fulfilled will be called an 'unsmooth speaker-shift' (USS). A distinction has been made between two kinds of speaker-shift: those which result in turn-taking and those which do not. A listener can shift to the speaking-mode and be engaged in double talking with the ongoing speaker for a period of time without taking over the turn, ie he does not perform solo talking for any period of time.

Simultaneous speech cannot, for obvious reasons, be easily rendered in written representation with its one-dimensional linear form. In the LLC, it has been marked by '*' or '+' surrounding those sequences which are jointly uttered by two or more speakers, for example:

- (58) A *I'm /not going to have my summers . bugged up in
*this kind of !wày#**
B **/no ((I)) /no* it'll be !pèrfectly alríght 'Reynard#*
(S.1.1; 9)

This system of transcription can result in extremely complicated stretches as Owen (1982) has correctly pointed out. A common way of indicating such simultaneous speech is instead:

- (59) A *..... up in *this kind of !wày#**
B **/no ((I)) /no* it'll be*

Fig. 16 shows types of speaker-shift between two speakers, A and B, with examples in Fig. 17. The possibility of silence is not accounted for as it is a temporary state:

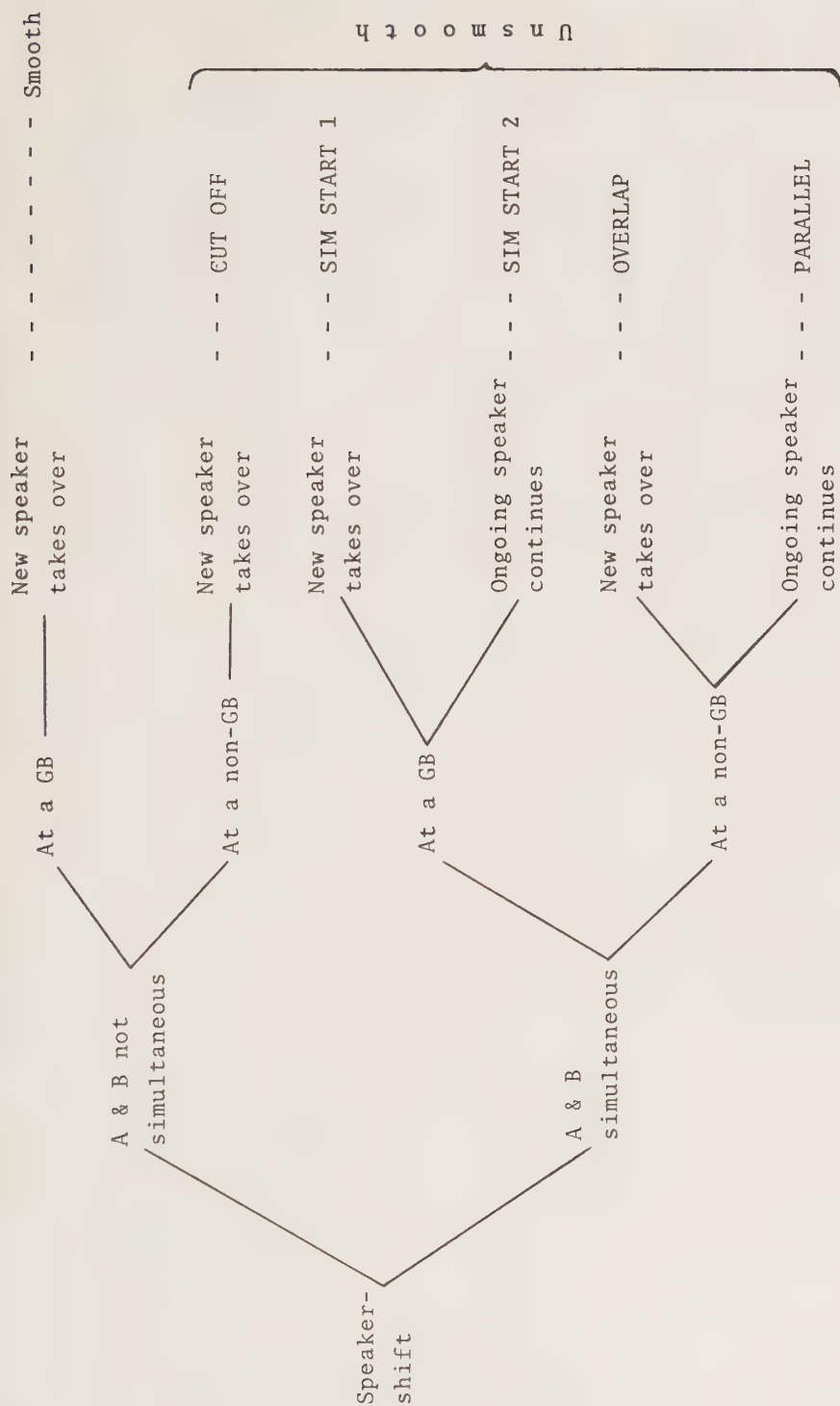


Fig. 16. Types of speaker-shift.

<u>Smooth speaker-shift</u>	
B: — — /that's what I 'think it's ll take#	
A: — — — oh /that's nòt 'very 'much# (S.4.2; 70)	a) no simultaneous talking b) new speaker enters at a GB c) new speaker takes over
<u>Unsmooth speaker-shift</u>	
CUT	
B: — — — there's /yet 'somebody 'else# /who's 'sort of (S.4.2; 80)	a) no simultaneous talking b) new speaker enters at a GB c) new speaker takes over
A: — — — /what a 'company is it 'with#	
SIM 1	
B: — — — it's /going to be 'rather 'glòomy# *and I* (S.5.8; 7)	a) simultaneous talking b) new speaker enters at a GB c) new speaker takes over
A: — — — *it's /going* to be 'terrible for her#	
SIM 2	
A: — — — it was for "that 'reason# that I /thought of 'doing 'this# *be/cause if (S.4.1; 15)	a) simultaneous talking b) new speaker enters at a GB c) current speaker continues
B: — — — there was* — "one 'issue* she'd /play 'that# (goes on) *((/nò I 'think#))*	
OVER	
A: — — — if /they (('haven't)) :read it# you /can't 'really 'have a *(('seminar#))*	a) simultaneous talking b) new speaker enters at a GB c) new speaker takes over
B: — — — 'sàid# /shall we [?] 'àò 'something 'else# (goes on) *wè'll# /I* (S.1.4; 72)	a) simultaneous talking b) new speaker enters at a GB c) new speaker takes over
PAR	
A: — — — but the /thing 'is# for *'instance# they've "stopped 'you 'see# you /know*	a) simultaneous talking b) new speaker enters at a GB c) current speaker continues
B: — — — *all the "mòdern 'people wìll stòp# (('ex/cept))* (S.1.4; 48-49)	a) simultaneous talking b) new speaker enters at a GB c) current speaker continues

Fig. 17. Types of speaker-shift. A vertical bar in the current speaker's output indicates a GB at which the new speaker enters.

The types of speaker-shift can also be ordered in a flow-chart:

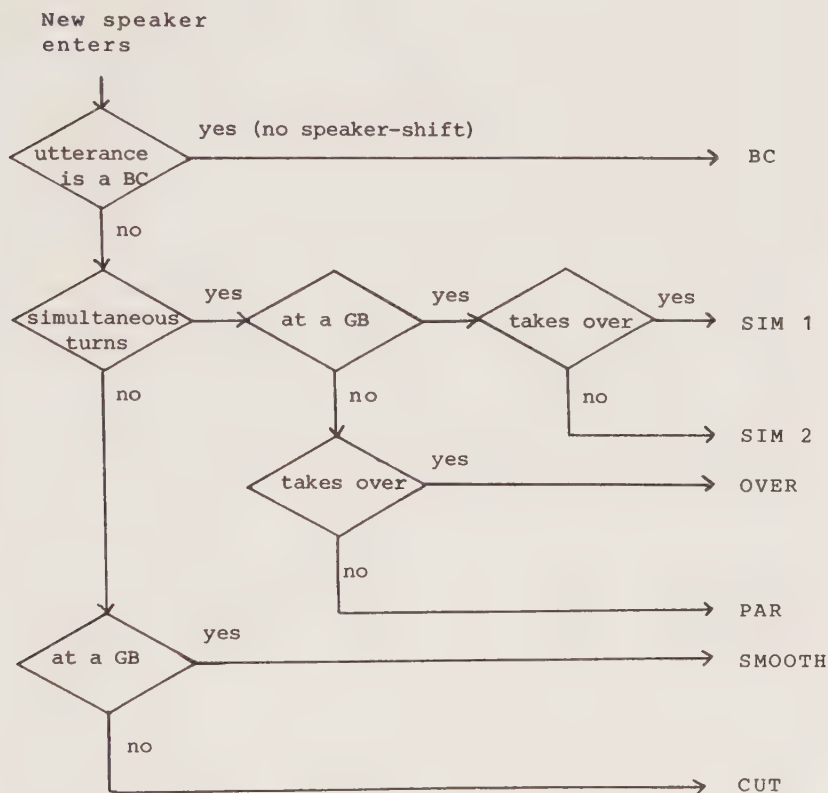


Fig. 18. Flow-chart of types of speaker-shift.

A list of BCs (except for sentence completions and restatements, of course, which are an open class) and the set of ordered rules could be fed into the computer for automatic categorization.⁴

Fig. 19 is a summary of the types of USS:

	At a GB	Sim. turns	Turn-taking
CUT OFF	-	-	+
SIM START 1	+	+	+
SIM START 2	+	+	-
OVERLAP	-	+	+
PARALLEL	-	+	-

Fig. 19. A summary of the types of USS.

There are other methodological issues that must be taken up here. A GB, as was said earlier, is no guarantee that the turn will actually end there, of course. It is only a point of possible completion of the turn and a point where turn-taking generally takes place. The GB preceded by a reduction in loudness and accompanied by a pause are the main indications to guide somebody who wants to take the floor. The more certain a person wants to be, before he enters, that he has found the end point of a turn, the more signals of turn-finality he will have to wait for and the longer he will have to let the pause grow. This problem, that a GB is not necessarily identical with an end of turn, is bound to be a trouble source. The new speaker may, for example, enter with a well-timed turn located at a TRP (smooth speaker-shift) but still be regarded as interrupting simply because his partner had more to say. This is either due to unclear signalling (the ongoing speaker signals what appears to be turn-yielding although he intends to continue) or to the fact that he both signals and intends turn-yielding but a sudden change of heart when a new impulse came to mind, made him go on.⁵ Theoretically, every instance of turn-taking can be a case of interruption as soon as the ongoing speaker considers himself not to have finished but gives up. But those cases where there is no sign of continuation from the current speaker do not allow investigation.⁶

Another thing is how they understand the right to speak. This concerns whether, at a TRP, there is free competition ('first come, first served') or whether the ongoing speaker has a right to continue if he has more to say. It will be especially complicated when one of them understands it to be free competition, ie that any GB is a permissible 'point of attack' and that the informality of the situation is such that no absolutely exact timing of the turns is required. At the same time, the other may feel a very strong need to finish before the partner enters and thus rejects ill-timed intrusions, even regarding them as a sign of nonchalance and lack of respect. If the attitudes on what conventions to follow here are not shared, irritation soon develops.

These are complications built into the problem which have been noted by Togeby (1981), meaning that there is a subjective element in the individual's interpretation of what is an inter-

ruption in the actual situation. It is therefore not always a question of who has the turn but rather who considers himself to have it.⁷

In this chapter, formal and functional aspects of USS will be studied. Some routine linguistic behaviour, like openings and closings (*hello* and *goodbye*) which occur at the ends of conversations, often overlap with each other (Jefferson 1973). Such more regular overlaps must be considered peripheral to a study of unsmooth speaker-shift and are therefore left out. Also, non-linguistic sounds, like coughs, sighs, laughs, etc. as well as non-human noises, like a cat miaowing outside, a telephone buzzing, a clock striking, etc. which now and then overlap with the ongoing talk, are excluded here as they are outside the conversation proper. These last two are together called 'contextual comments' in the LLC and are surrounded by single round brackets in the transcription.

Another methodological issue must be discussed. In this chapter, also words which are transcribed as unclear on tape by the SEU analysts are included. These words are surrounded by double round brackets in the LLC indicating uncertainty with respect to the interpretation. The reason for including them is that it is unavoidable that a substantial part of simultaneous talk, particularly in the surreptitious recordings where the microphone is hidden under a coffee table or elsewhere, cannot always be captured with good quality. Considerable variations in speed and loudness complicate matters further. When speed goes up at the same time as loudness goes down, audibility will deteriorate. Inferior sound quality is the price that has to be paid for surreptitious recordings.⁸ However, when listening to the audio tapes in London on several occasions, I have found that the suggestions given by the analyst concerning the contents of these double brackets are in most cases the most probable ones. As a large number of USS, wholly or partially, appear within double brackets, the material would not be sufficient for a detailed study if they were excluded. Finally, of the double-bracketed instances, those which are completely unreliable and which only contain an estimated number of syllables, eg ((3-4 sylls)), have been excluded here.

7.3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Formal aspects

It was found earlier (Chapter 5, Table 13) that the whole material contained 1643 non-simultaneous turns which means 1633 such turn-takings. Of these turn-takings, 1569 (96.1%) occurred at a GB and 64 (3.9%) at a non-GB. Of these 64 instances, 40 were analysed as self-interruption, where the current speaker interrupted himself and with a lengthy pause left the floor open to his partner; 24 were analysed as cases where the current speaker was cut off by the other. The self-interruptions have been classified among the smooth speaker-shifts and the 24 occurrences where the speaker was cut off among the unsmooth ones (CUT). The distribution of all types of USS is accounted for in Table 32. As can be seen, there was considerable variation as regards the number of USS among the conversations, ranging between 8 and 84. This difference might either indicate that the number of occurrences is related to the situation, like engagement in the topic, or to the general attitude of the participants to how the turn-taking rules are to be observed and practised.⁹ The two most common types of USS were SIM 1 and OVER. This is to say that when the new speaker entered, he generally also took over because of all the 388 'clear' instances of USS, 279 (71.9%) resulted in turn-taking (CUT, SIM 1, and OVER together). The 279 unsmooth turn-takings made up 14.8% of all the 1888 turn-takings in the material. Almost half (47.7%) of all occurrences took place at a GB (SIM 1 and SIM 2 together).¹⁰

The instances of USS were evenly dispersed within the conversations without a single exception. The sequences of simultaneous talk were observed to contain one to three words for each speaker, on an average, and seldom more than six to seven words. It has been noted by others, for example, Jaffe & Feldstein (1970: 9) and Sacks et al (1974:706) that periods of joint talking are frequent in number but short in length. When two people find themselves talking at the same time, one of them normally stops straightaway, thereby accommodating to the rule that one person speaks at a time and thereby also reducing friction in the communication.

Con- versation	Spea- ker	CUT	SIM 1	SIM 2	OVER	PAR	Unclear ¹¹	Total	Both spea- kers TOTAL
Group I	S.1.1	A	0	6	4	9	5	24	50
	<u>B</u>	1	10	3	8	2		24	
	S.1.2:1	A	2	5	2	3		14	26
	B	1	5	1	4	0	1	11	
	S.1.4	A	5	17	3	15	8	48	84
	B	2	8	4	11	7	4	32	
	S.1.6	<u>A</u>	0	1	0	1	0	2	8
	B	0	2	0	1	3		6	
	S.4.1	A	0	8	5	6	6	25	52
	<u>B</u>	2	8	5	8	2	2	25	
	S.4.2	<u>A</u>	2	3	2	11	0	18	35
	<u>B</u>	2	6	2	5	0	2	15	
Group II	S.5.8	A	0	6	1	1	0	8	14
	B	1	1	2	0	0	2	4	
	S.5.9	A	1	12	6	11	4	34	61
	<u>B</u>	1	9	2	7	5	3	24	
	S.5.10	A	0	3	2	1	0	6	17
	B	2	4	1	2	1	1	10	
	S.6.2	<u>A</u>	1	7	6	9	6	29	60
	<u>B</u>	1	9	4	12	3	2	29	
Total		24	130	55	125	54	19	388	407

Table 32. The distribution of the types of USS. For CUT, SIM 1, and OVER, which all go to turn-taking, the figures concern the person who entered and took over. For SIM 2 and PAR where there is no turn-taking, the figures stand for the person who entered but did not take over. Female speakers in mixed-sex dyads are circled and older speakers in mixed-age dyads are underlined.

Sex

It has been claimed by Key (1975:130) that there are differences in the turn-taking behaviour between men and women. She maintains that men interrupt women more often than vice versa. Unfortunately, she does not support her arguments with satisfactory evidence to prove such a generalisation but raises a problem worth testing.

Argyle, Lalljee & Cook (1968) made an experimental study of dyadic interaction and their work was partly devoted to interruptive behaviour. They conclude from their results that "It looks as if males are motivated to dominate and do so largely by interrupting and talking more" (p. 15). As was said above, the weakness of their study, which they also share with most other studies of the problem, lies in the fact that they let all kinds of joint talking qualify as interruption.

Zimmerman & West (1975) examined 31 dyadic conversations surreptitiously recorded in public places. In their analysis, they distinguish between two groups of anomalous turn-takings; those where the new speaker entered at the end of a completed sentence and simultaneous speech followed ('overlap') and those where the new speaker entered at a non-completed sentence ('interruption'). They label these two types 'speaker-transition errors' and 'violations', respectively. They found that these anomalous speaker-shifts were fairly equally divided between the participants in any of the 20 same-sex conversations whereas in cross-sex conversations "virtually all the interruptions and overlaps are by the male speakers (98% and 100%, respectively)" (p. 115). Like Argyle et al, they conclude that interruptions, which are violations of a speaker's right to complete the turn, reflect male dominance giving females restricted rights to speak and to be listened to. Their statistical results are striking and their study is one of the most quoted ones on interruption. It is therefore necessary that the methodological aspects of their work be further scrutinized.

First, Zimmerman & West do not mention that their errors and violations can have many other functions than expressing dominance and controlling the topic. This has been pointed out by Meltzer et al (1971:392f) and by Ferguson (1977:301), who concludes that "Dominance may be a factor which is of limited or no importance

during many mistimed speaker-switches". Second, we do not know the message content of these 'intruding turns'. The interactants are building a conversation together and try to make talk proceed, to show active participation, to ask questions when there is uncertainty, to come in with brief additional comments without taking over. Sometimes these are manifested as simultaneous turns. Third, we are not told how these overlaps and interruptions were uttered, loud or weak, quick or slow, factors that can be relevant when deciding whether an utterance is to be classified as an interruption or not. Fourth, one important aspect of conversation here is whether it is cooperative or competitive. We will see later that simultaneous speech can in certain cases be a sign of cooperation and is not necessarily understood as an interruption by the interactants. Fifth, it is not known how the 'victim' was affected by the intrusion. In brief, in their study, Zimmerman & West have lumped together all simultaneous turns, although very different in nature, into two big groups in a coarse and rather rigid way. There is no attempt to go beyond the mere number of occurrences. Nevertheless, in its approach, their work is an interesting study of the correlation between this type of speaker-shift and specific groups of people.

In the present material, no clear differences could be found when the number of USS was related to sex of speaker. The normal behaviour of the new speaker to take over when entering was also generally true regardless of sex of speaker. In Table 33, the figures are given for 'floor-winning' for the five mixed-sex dyads with respect to USS:

		Male continued	Female continued	Total
Male talked, female entered	O:	23	75	98
	E:	44.5	53.5	
Female talked, male entered	O:	71	38	109
	E:	49.5	59.5	
Total		94	113	207

Table 33. Contingency table of the outcome of USS in the mixed-sex dyads. Chi-square = 36.14, df = 1, $p < .001$.

It was also studied whether there were more 'interruptions' (as defined by Zimmerman & West) among the males than among the females. Their concept of interruption corresponds to the categories CUT, OVER, and PAR together where the new speaker comes in before the ongoing speaker has reached a GB. The difference was small both when related to sex and to age of speaker. Beattie (1981b) using Ferguson's (1977) system of analysis found no sex differences as regards interruptions in tutorial groups.

Precision timing to come in at a GB, ie SIM 1 and SIM 2, did not reveal any great differences for sex either. In this case, it should be mentioned that it is possible that the new speaker indeed aimed at a GB when starting to talk but that an unexpected change, for example a sudden step-up in speed starting just before the boundary, tricked him so that he missed the target with a word or two. Quite unintentionally, he would find himself involved in USS. Coming in at exactly the right moment is like hitting an object in motion.¹²

It was proposed in Chapter 3 that the number of USS may be fewer in conversations where the participants know that they are being recorded compared with when they are unaware of that. This was tested (Chi-square, contingency table) but the correctness of this hypothesis was only confirmed on the 5% level of significance, a level that is not fully reliable when N is nearly 2000 as in this case.

Functional aspects

Tempo and loudness variations

Leaving now the purely formal aspects of USS aside, I will go on to look at their various functions in actual contexts and see how the participants react to them. To do that, it becomes obvious that the instances have to be examined more individually.

It was seen in Table 32 that when the new speaker entered, he also, as a rule, took over. This happened in 7 cases out of 10. The next step will be to see whether any particular features were used by the ongoing speaker at an instance of USS.

It was found earlier (Chapter 4, Tables 6 and 7) that in smooth turn-takings the new speaker started his turn with higher

speed than normal in 11.5%, with normal in 86.0%, and with lower speed than normal in 2.5% of all cases. It was also found that the new speaker started his turn with higher loudness than normal in 5.1%, with normal in 71.1%, and with lower loudness than normal in 23.8%. Table 34 shows the figures for the same four conversations that were studied in Chapter 4 with regard to the new speaker at an USS with simultaneous turns:

	Tempo		Loudness	
	SMOOTH	USS	SMOOTH	USS
Higher than normal ('increased')	11.5%	19.9%	5.1%	8.3%
Normal	86.0%	79.6%	71.1%	69.1%
Lower than normal ('reduced')	2.5%	0.5%	23.8%	22.6%

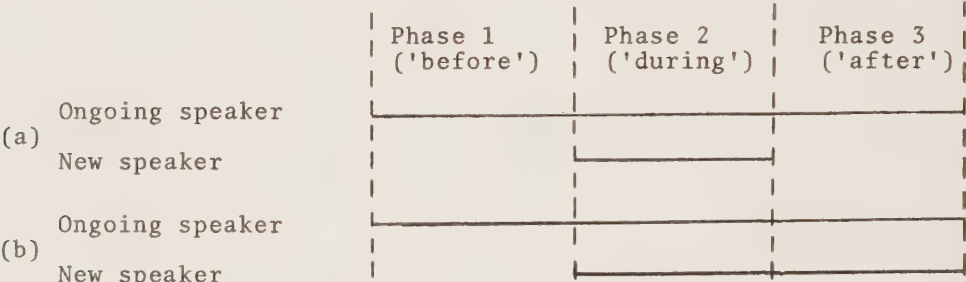
Table 34. Tempo and loudness variations as regards the new speaker's first TU at an USS with simultaneous turns.

It appears that the new speaker used both higher speed and higher volume more often at an USS than at a smooth speaker-shift. But, in the majority of the cases, there was no struggle for the turn judging by the fact that the speaker generally used his normal speed and loudness and there were no conflicting intentions as to who should speak from the moment that there were joint turns.

Meltzer et al discuss the role of loudness variation. They argue that one typical function is as an interactional device related to the turn-taking process. They made an instrumental analysis of amplitude variation and observed a significant correlation between successful interruptions in discussions and the change in vocal amplitude. Their study is concentrated on how interruptions are 'won' and 'lost' and they found both that "It is the *raising* of the voice in response to an interruption, or the *differential* of one's voice and that of the other during the interruption, that is so highly related to the outcome" (p. 396) and "the greater the amplitude differential in favour of the de-

fender, the lower the likelihood of success by the interrupter" (p. 399).

It will thus be of interest to look at the ongoing and new speakers' use of tempo and loudness properties when there is double talking. Following Meltzer et al, I will divide the actual process of simultaneous turns into three phases, where Phase 1 means that the ongoing speaker is talking alone ('before'), Phase 2 that both speakers are talking ('during'), and Phase 3 that one of them is talking alone again ('after'). In this study, Phase 1 stands for 1 TU before and Phase 3 for 1 TU after Phase 2:



(From Meltzer, Morris & Hayes 1971)

Fig. 20. Simultaneous turns; before, during, and after. Only (b) involves turn-taking.

Table 35 presents tempo and loudness conditions for the three phases above for all instances of simultaneous USS. As can be seen, there were, in all, 364 unsmooth simultaneous speaker-shifts, 255 (70.1%) of which resulted in turn-taking. In 66 (18.1%) of all those speaker-shifts, the new speaker entered with increased speed and in 58 (15.9%) with reduced loudness. While speed did not undergo great changes from Phase 1 to Phase 2 for the ongoing speaker, increased loudness was more than four times more common in Phase 2.

Speier (1973:44f) gives the following explanation of the relation between the speaker and his turn:

One feature of a conversation's sequential organization to which speakers are attuned is how turns belong to their speakers; it is as though a speaker owned a piece of the conversation for the duration of his turn, a slot that others treat as properly his¹³

	P h a s e 1			P h a s e 2			P h a s e 3		
	T e m p o		Loudness	T e m p o		Loudness	T e m p o		Loudness
	L	Ø	H	L	Ø	H	L	Ø	H
Ongoing speaker	5	322	37	93	263	8	74	255	35
%	1.4	88.4	10.2	25.5	73.2	2.2	20.3	70.1	9.6
New speaker	-	-	-	-	-	-	58	270	36
%	-	-	-	0.6	81.3	18.1	15.9	74.2	9.9
%	-	-	-	6	301	57	66	256	42
	-	-	-	1.6	82.7	15.7	18.1	70.3	11.6
Total	364			364			364 + 364		

Table 35. Tempo and loudness conditions for the three phases of the 364 instances of simultaneous U.S.S. L = lower than normal, $\emptyset$ = normal, H = higher than normal.

A person who regards himself as being interrupted has two major choices: yield or continue, sometimes better put as surrender or defend.¹⁴ Meltzer et al claim that raised volume has one specific function, to indicate floor-holding. By going up in loudness, the ongoing speaker tries to protect the turn and the partner is thereby indirectly told to withdraw as he is, as it were, overstepping a line which the current speaker considers he should stay beyond. Raised volume is therefore an important feature signalling that the ongoing speaker wants to hold the floor and the new speaker to take the floor. The choice of loudness properties is in close relation with the degree of determination to effectuate turn-holding and turn-taking respectively, that they have upon the entrance of the new speaker. The use of these signals, either as a defense or an attack technique, has to do with the priority a person gives to his turn. As can be seen in Table 36, a step-up in loudness was a more efficient means than a step-up in speed for a person wanting to force his will through whether he was the ongoing or the new speaker:

	New speaker has	Ongoing speaker has	New speaker takes over	Ongoing speaker continues	
Loudness	∅/L	∅/L	211 (75.1%)	70 (24.9%)	281
	H	∅/L	31 (88.6%)	4 (11.4%)	35
	∅/L	H	8 (19.0%)	34 (81.0%)	42
	H	H	5 (83.0%)	1 (16.7%)	6
			<u>255</u>	<u>109</u>	<u>364</u>
Tempo	∅/L	∅/L	185 (69.8%)	80 (30.2%)	265
	H	∅/L	40 (71.4%)	16 (28.6%)	56
	∅/L	H	25 (71.4%)	10 (28.6%)	35
	H	H	5 (62.5%)	3 (37.5%)	8
			<u>255</u>	<u>109</u>	<u>364</u>

Table 36. The distribution of loudness and tempo properties for the new and ongoing speaker in instances of simultaneous USS in Phase 2 related to floor-winning.

The figures show that when both speakers had their normal or reduced loudness, the new speaker took over in more than 7 cases out of 10 (75.1%) but when he alone had a step-up in loudness, he took the floor in almost 9 cases out of 10 (88.6%). Moreover, the figures also show that when the ongoing speaker raised his loudness, his chances to suppress the new speaker's attempt and avoid losing the floor increased by more than three times. This corroborates Meltzer et al's findings. A new speaker who comes in and wants to take over has probably got the best chances to succeed if he:

- selects a point where the ongoing speaker reveals some 'weakness', eg draws breath or shows uncertainty with respect to continued production in the form of a pause, hesitation, or has reduced intensity, like weaker loudness or slower speed
- does it when he is convinced that he is able to drive his turn home
- starts his turn with raised loudness as a surprise technique while the ongoing speaker has a step-down in his turn

Only minor and not statistically significant differences could be found, both for the new and the ongoing speaker in the use of loudness and speed properties with respect to floor-winning when related to sex and age of speaker and to the manner of recording.

Normally, when one of them went up in loudness, the other gave up rather quickly. But there were a few cases where both of them continued to claim the speaker role and refused to give up. This competition for the floor led to an increase step by step in intensity from the two speakers when trying to talk the other down. Verbal duelling of this kind where both tried to shake off the partner continued until one of them finally gave up the battle for the turn. When this happened, a state of equilibrium was reached, a return from a period of high intensity to a more normal state, so that talk could take place at a level where communication is more successful.¹⁵ After such a clash, there was a moment of silence before a new communicative effort was made.

However, in the present material, these conflicting intentions only rarely developed into such a duel but stopped at a skirmish as the interactants behaved in a rather controlled way.

Speech disruptions

Another aspect of the ongoing speaker's reaction at an instance of USS has to do with disturbances in his speech production. In order to study whether his output was affected by the entrance of the new speaker, seven categories of speech disruption (or hesitation phenomena) were set up (see Blankenship & Kay 1964 and Kasl & Mahl 1965).

These categories were:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 brief silent pause ('.') at a non-GB | |
| 2 long silent pause ('-') at a non-GB | |
| 3 extra long silent pause ('-.', '--', '---') at a non-GB | |
| 4 voiced pause (ə/:/, ə/:m) at a non-GB | |
| 5 repetition | } (for examples, see p. 56) |
| 6 reformulation | |
| 7 fragmentation | |

Presence of these features was registered for the ongoing speaker in Phase 1 and Phase 2 for every USS with simultaneous turns. This approach would allow a comparison of the number of speech disruptions between the two phases. The result can be found in Table 37 (a combination of two or more of the above features was counted as one occurrence). The table gives clear evidence that there was a great difference between Phase 1 and Phase 2. Every individual feature had a higher occurrence in Phase 2 and together the instances of speech disruption in Phase 2 were more than twice as frequent as in Phase 1. If Phase 1 can be taken as a generally representative sequence of the ongoing speaker's talk when he speaks alone, and there is no evidence to the contrary, this would be a clear case where one type of linguistic behaviour had an immediate effect on another. The explanation why there were more cases of speech disruption in Phase 2 presumably has to do with USS being a stress factor which causes the ongoing speaker to shift his attention from his own planning and production to

Feature	Phase 1	Phase 2
1	4	9
2	1	3
3	1	2
4	5	6
5	5	15
6	1	7
7	1	2
comb.	6	20
Total	24	64

Table 37. The distribution of speech disruptions in Phase 1 and Phase 2.

his partner's entrance, a kind of 'negative reinforcement' or maybe negative feedback.

The most common individual feature was repetition, which, in a few cases, did not seem to be a speech disruption but was rather used to outwait the other, to indicate turn-holding: 'I intend to continue my turn as soon as you have returned to the listening-mode'. When employed by the new speaker, repetition can be used as a turn-claiming signal: 'I intend to take the turn as soon as you have finished'. An example of repetition as turn-claiming:

- (60) B /I !thought he was :going to :talk us into :having to
do another com:plete set of . :set !bōoks# for /that
!bloody phil!òlogy *páper##
A */m## .
B /if he !hăd# I'd +((have /said you 3-4 !sýlls#))+
A +ði the /other the /other the /other+ the /other mán# .
ə:m - ((who /[rəu?] 3-4 sylls)) I /thòught# was /going
to get you :wíld# was /Pòtter# (S.1.1; 50)

Another kind of disruption was when the ongoing speaker left his grammatical construction incomplete in 46 cases in Phase 2:

(61) B /sò# . we /then had a 'panful of 'melted :cùrlers#
 (- laughs) because the in/side of them# is /all -
sort of

A *and was* the /òther 'pan# /burnt as wéll# - (S.4.1; 22)

It was noted that the further the ongoing speaker had reached in his construction, the less likely it was that he gave up by leaving it incomplete. He might well give up the turn rather soon after the new speaker had entered, but if he had spent some time building up a grammatical sequence, he also wanted to finish it. Most cases of incompleteness therefore took place rather soon after a GB when a new construction was at its beginning:

(62) B /Ì think 'I've got a plúg# - I'm /not sùre# I
/((haven't)) got *a 'plug sòme'where#*

A *I /think !Ì'll* ((make)) anóther 'one# (S.1.4; 62-63)

(63) B you'll /just !have to !càncel it# it's /just !fòolish#
you */can't ((go to))*

A *no* I'm /nòt going to càncel it# (S.4.2; 56)

Discourse categories

It was also studied whether there was a relation between certain types of discourse categories and the occurrence of USS. Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) performed a discourse analysis in the classroom with children between 11 and 12. Their analytical model is based on a rank scale with five hierarchical ranks - Lesson, Transaction, Exchange, Move, and Act - where every rank can be expressed in terms of the rank below. However, their system is not directly applicable to spontaneous conversation. In classroom interaction, the social roles are more fixed and talk is structured in the way that it fulfils pedagogical purposes, for example, questions and feedback. Teacher-pupil communication is therefore a unique speech situation in which normal rules of interaction are greatly modified or even suspended. Sinclair & Coulthard also point out that the classroom situation is a special type of discourse and indirectly they also warn against applying their system to other speech events (p. 6).

In order to study the content of the new speaker's message, the discourse categories were again divided into two main groups, elicits and assertions.

ELICIT

Question a) Check-up; a question that checks what was said and asks for repetition, specification, or explanation:

- (64) B *and /every wèek# there's yet !somebody
èlse# /who's sort of*
A */what [ə] !còmpany is it 'with#*
B */it's 'these :very pèople# who've /had
so much !tròuble# .*
A */Jòhnson(('s))#*
B */Jòhnson's# . /yèah#* (S.4.2; 81)

In some cases, it was the simultaneity of the turns itself that was the trouble source as it blocked communication and caused the request for repetition:

- (65) B *I'll "/cròwn that 'bastard# *((be/fore
I'm fìnished with him# - it /used to be))
the " !sàme {with the* /bôard#}# as
/wèll# .*
A **(- laughs) * ((/oh nò# I could /see
you sort of !sèething#))* /whát#*
B *the /same at the bôard 'meetings#*
(S.1.1; 51)

b) Other; a question that is not uttered as a reaction to what was just said. In the example below, the two people are having tea and there is no verbal answer to the question but probably an extra-linguistic one:

- (66) A *well he ... /came 'up to my róom# and
said /would I *((please))**
 B **/yès#**
 A *'come at "fòur o'clock **{to/dày#}# .
 ((at)) /fòur#** -*
 B ***/oh yès# ((have you /got some mîlk
 for mé#))*** (S.1.4; 2-3)

ASSERTION

Answer Answer to a question, either only as *m*, *yes* or *no* or in the form of a longer answer to an open question.

Comment This is a large and very mixed group. It contains everything that a person utters apart from an elicit and an answer. Subdivision of the comments proved to be an impossible task because the turn content was either difficult to subcategorize or could be placed in more than one category. The result of such an attempt too often had to rest barely on my own subjective interpretation. However, there was another and more important reason for not trying to make a thorough discourse analysis. It does not seem likely that comments in general will be equally interesting to examine with respect to smooth versus unsmooth speaker-shift. An examination of one conversation also supported this impression. Instead, one type of comment was selected for investigation, namely one in which the new speaker objected to what the ongoing speaker had just said. The hypothesis was that an objection implies a greater interest in the topic which, in turn, affects the speaker-shift process with the result that the ordinary principles of turn-taking are overruled. An objection would therefore come more often in the form of an USS than of a smooth speaker-shift. The requirement of an objection for testing this hypothesis was that it contained an explicit protest, disagreement, or correction denying, wholly or partially, the truth value of a given proposition. Such an objection

was generally introduced by *no*, *but*, *yes but*, followed by the denial:

- (67) A * ((/how else 2 syls))*
 B * /how will 'students* jùstify# /staying in Lònðon# /spending mòihey you 'see# if they /don't get *tàught#*
 A * /yès#* but the /pòiut 'is# that [iə] that if we "/chànge the 'system# to al"/lòw for this# that they're */stàrting 'up#*
 B *but we /still* 'don't pro'pose to !dò it# -
 (S.1.4; 47)

- (68) A I /don't think it 'makes any dífference# /whether you :get the pre'scription# - in the /pðst# the next /mórning# or /that !ève*ning#*
 B *it* /does indèed# if I /get it that 'eve-ning then I'm 'twelve hours ahead {/àren't I#}#
 (S.4.2; 66)

The result of the hypothesis was the following:

		Smooth	Unsmooth	Total
Comment of objection	O	45	60	105
	E:	77.3	27.7	
Comment of non-objection	O:	759	228	987
	E:	726.7	260.3	
Total		804	288	1092

Table 38. Contingency table of comments of objection in relation to smooth and unsmooth speaker-shift. Chi-square = 56.64, df = 1, $p < .001$.

It seems as if a clash of opinions also means a clash of turn-taking. One may argue that when the emotional temperature goes

up, there are interactional consequences that concern speaker-shift.

Questions were generally of a check-up character. Although they were often uttered by the new speaker in the midst of the ongoing output, they must be considered to be rather legitimate intrusions. Questions obviously have a high priority in conversation because they were dealt with at once by the partner also when delivered in an unsmooth manner:

- (69) B *and the /ðther 'paper# seems /rather to have 'gone to
!!pòt# - - as /far as :İ can *make 'out# because
/we've .**
A **((syll)) do you /mean the phil!!òlogy 'paper#*
B */yès# -* (S.6.2; 9-10)

Many answers to questions were also uttered before the question was completed. One probable reason for this was often that the question was longer than expected:

- (70) B *because */we could**
A **but /what* a 'bout ði: :làter 'history# **. because
((you know)) /that's what you 'should have been 'doing
this yèar#***
B ***/well you see the !làter 'history# Miss "/Stamp's
been 'doing** this . {/with us#}# -* (S.6.2; 8)

In addition to the comments of objection, the new speaker's comments of non-objection involving USS were studied from four angles: length, degree of loudness, syntax, and discourse and the current speaker's reaction in view of degree of loudness and speech disruption. The reason for focussing the attention on these aspects falls back on the observation that many utterances, particularly brief comments with low loudness, although produced as USS still did not seem to be meant to take the turn. They were more a background comment or even a silent reflection causing no noticeable reaction from the other (see also Table 35 which shows that in 15.9% of all cases the new speaker entered with reduced loudness). In this respect, these brief comments have similarities with the BCs being emitted within the ongoing turn without any obvious intention to take the floor:¹⁶

- (71) B I /mèan# ((I'm)) /not in a po:sition to 'give *à chèque#*
- A */what was !thàt#* .
- B /wàter# in the /tấp {over !thèrè#}# I'm "/not in a +po:sition to give a -+ to give a chèque#
- A +((/oh I'didn't)) !sèe thát#+ (S.4.1; 58)

Goffman (1976:275) expresses similar views and mentions that some utterances are often asides and parenthetical remarks uttered "*without having the floor or trying to get it*". Such an utterance has much of a 'take-it-or-leave-it' character.

These comments of non-objection, which, when manifested as USS generally appear as PAR, were hypothesized seldom to cause any reactions from the ongoing speaker as regards step-up in loudness and/or speech disruptions. The result of length, degree of loudness, syntax, discourse, and speech disruptions for PAR will be found in Tables 39 and 40. It is clear that when the new speaker entered at a non-TRP without taking over (PAR), he did it, as a rule, with a brief, complete sentence contained in one TU and expressing a comment of non-objection uttered with reduced or normal loudness causing neither increased loudness nor speech disruptions on the part of the ongoing speaker.

Tables 41 and 42 display the same conditions for the comments of non-objection. The tables suggest that when the ongoing speaker realizes that the new speaker does not intend to take over, there is no need for a step-up in loudness. I will therefore propose an interactional rule: *an ongoing speaker who is aware that his partner does not intend to take over will accept a brief comment to be uttered almost anywhere in his output without treating it as an interruption.*

Other functional aspects

Hein (1980) makes a distinction between two kinds of interruption: those caused by something that has already been said and where the trouble source is located in the near past, for example a check-up question, and those caused by what is to come and where the trouble source is located in the near future. In the latter case, the interruptive action is concerned with the pre-

Length	No	Loudness	No	Syntax	No	Discourse	No
≤1 TU	42	L	22	Complete	47	Question	10
2 TUs	8	∅	28	Incompl.	7	Answer	4
>2 TUs	4	H	4			Comment of non-objection	33
						Unclear	7

Table 39. The 54 instances of PAR with respect to length, loudness, syntax, and discourse conditions for the new speaker.

Loudness	No	Speech disruptions	No
L	13	yes	9
∅	38	no	45
H	3		

Table 40. The 54 instances of PAR with respect to loudness and speech disruptions for the ongoing speaker.

Length	No	Loudness	No	Syntax	No
≤1 TU	27	L	15	Complete	29
2 TUs	4	∅	15	Incompl.	4
>2 TUs	2	H	3		

Table 41. The 33 instances of comments of non-objection occurring as PAR with respect to length, loudness, and syntax conditions for the new speaker.

Loudness	No	Speech disruptions	No
L	9	yes	4
∅	23	no	29
H	1		

Table 42. The 33 instances of comments of non-objection occurring as PAR with respect to loudness and speech disruptions for the ongoing speaker.

vention of something to be said and aims at freeezing the situation at a certain point as a kind of censorship technique. An example of this is when one of the participants wants to elaborate on an issue or does not want a certain topic to come up or be expanded on and therefore tries to cut it short. One instance close to that was observed:

- (72) A *I /think one . [w] /whether you 'look at it as - the :fact that she's an M"!P# . or */look at it**
 B **/no !nô#* I /don't look at it like that **'[a:]***
 A ***/now [lə?]***
 B */nô {/nô#}# I /don't at !àll# I /look at it ((as)) . /in *the !sense that**
 A **the /fact .* that !she's a !!stùdent# - (S.4.1; 62-63)*

By almost releasing a little word storm, Speaker B refuses, as it were, to hear more and Speaker A is hindered to continue. When used in combination with power and dominance, obstruction of the partner is a way of closing the door to communication, a form of 'anti-communication'. This is a good illustration of Abercrombie's (1963:11) statement that conversation "may involve exchanging information or merely exchanging goodwill - or perhaps ill-will".¹⁷

In conversation, certain alternative conventions are sometimes developed by 'negotiation'. One example of this with respect to turn-taking is that less precision to take the floor at a TRP can be tolerated on condition that it is mutually accepted. A commonly used technique by the new speaker was to come in and take over as soon as the main idea of the message ('body') had been understood or anticipated, leaving the rest of the message ('tail') aside. When the listener believed that he had a clear reading of the speaker's intended message, he released his contribution, generally one or two words before the TRP:

- (73) A *so it's /not until - !next year that *the job ((will be)) :advertised#**
 B **/January I sup:pose there* may be an :interview round about Jànuary#* (S.1.1; 16)

This is a way of 'editing redundancy', of disregarding pieces of relatively low interest. It means that of the three features con-

stituting a GB, the semantic one is given the highest priority. This technique of editing redundancy is systematic in the sense that it makes recurrent use of the sequential interpretational possibilities that the linguistic structure offers. This is due to the fact that once certain words have been said, some continuations become more probable than others. There is seldom any vying for the floor with this type of turn-taking and these 'intrusions', often in the form of OVERLAPS, therefore appear to be well-synchronized speaker-shifts and cooperative rather than competitive. The strategy of editing redundancy is an example of such an alternative and mutually accepted convention.

When the floor is abruptly lost, it can be regained by the same method. One violation is met with with a similar one, a method that could be called 'measure for measure':

- (74) B *I'm sur/prised# I /never 'actually :hād him . as a /tēach*er#**
 A **/no* I /Ĩ never 'had him# /èither but **[ə]***
 B ***but** /I thought 'he was sup'posed to be 'quite gòd#* (S.5.9; 81-82)

In general, the underlying reason behind USS is eagerness to make one's contribution. The listener has a supply of linguistic goods that he is eager to unload straightaway. The frequency with which USS occurs has, at least to some extent, to do with the intensity of talk, with the degree of involvement in the conversation. For the most part, this eagerness is coupled with one of the other factors discussed above but there were also examples of sheer eagerness ('now or never') being the only plausible cause. It even happened, for example, that the new speaker after having forced his will through and gained the floor, stood there without knowing exactly what to do with it. This resulted in a moment's hesitation about what was to happen next.

On the basis of what was found in this material, the various functions and uses of USS can be summed up as follows:

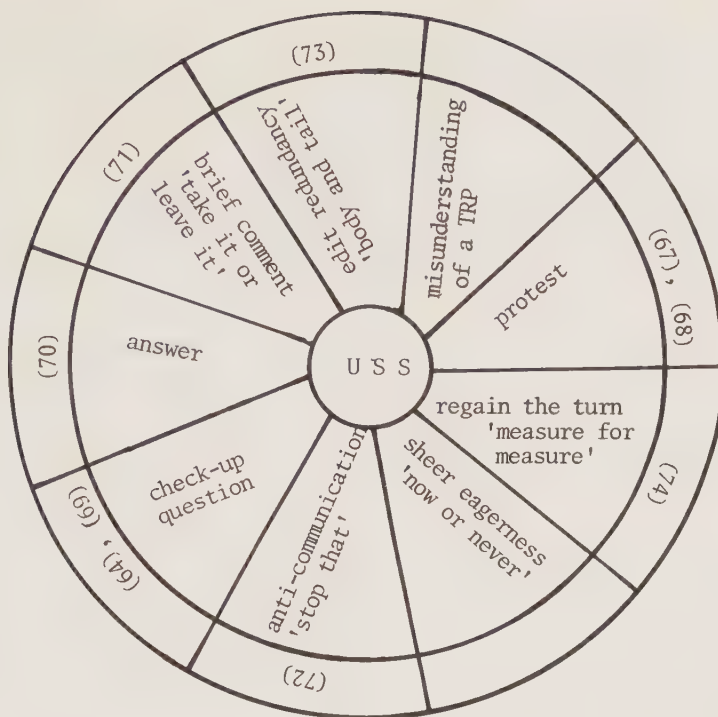


Fig. 21. Functions and uses of USS. Figures in brackets refer to examples in the text.

In the figure, check-up questions and anti-communication could be said to represent two extremes with respect to the legitimacy of using USS.

Finally, one question must be asked. Is there a well-defined group of speaker-shifts that can be fully defined as interruptions on the basis of certain specific criteria and if so, what are the criteria? In answer to that question, I will propose that the whole complex of what is an interruption cannot be satisfactorily described only with the help of formal criteria. The reasons are that there is, as was said earlier, a subjective element involved and that there exists no specific and unambiguous marker of turn-finality. However, there are four central factors for sorting out instances of interruption from the rest of the USS. These factors are given below with no claim to their being in any hierarchical order:

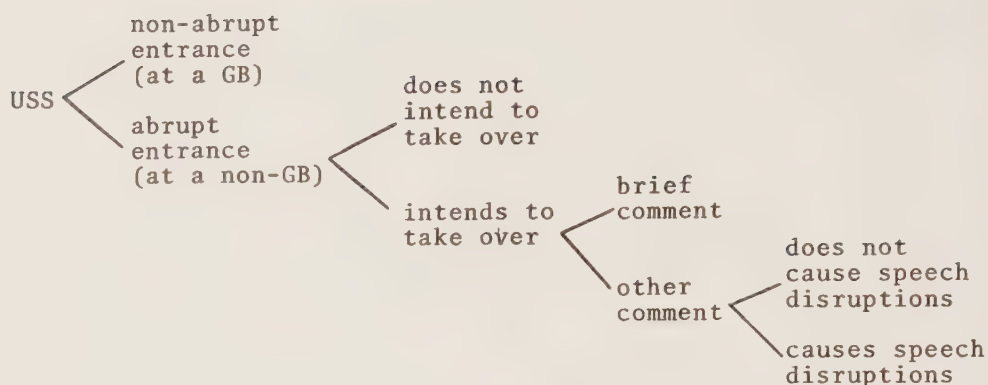


Fig. 22. Dimensions of interruption.

The further down in the figure an instance of USS is placed (ie the more of the four criteria it fulfils), the more certain it will be that it is a case of interruption in the full sense of the word. This suggests that interruptions should chiefly be sought in the categories CUT and OVER.

No differences could be found related to sex and age of speaker or to the manner of recording when these factors were tested.

7.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has dealt with those speaker-shifts which involved simultaneous turns and/or did not take place at a GB. These were together labelled unsmooth speaker-shift (USS). Two criteria were used for grouping tokens of USS into types: the grammatical boundary and turn-taking. Hereby, five subtypes of USS were singled out. Of all the 1888 turn-takings in the material, 279 (14.8%) were unsmooth. It should be pointed out that the frequencies differed considerably from conversation to conversation. There were also 109 instances where the new speaker entered but did not take the floor and hence there was no turn-taking. As in earlier studies, the simultaneous turns were generally found to be short, as a rule less than 4 words. Also, the instances of USS were evenly dispersed within the conversations.

The focus of attention was laid on the new speaker at an USS, ie the person who entered before the ongoing speaker was

through speaking. Various aspects were looked at: loudness, speed, length, discourse content, floor-winning, age and sex of speaker and the manner of recording. The ongoing speaker's reactions were also studied.

A step-up in loudness was noted to be an efficient means both when a participant wanted to hold and to take the turn, presumably most efficient when employed suddenly as a surprise technique.

There was an increase of speech disruptions on the part of the ongoing speaker from just before simultaneous turns started, to while they were lasting. This shows that the ongoing speaker was often enough affected by the intrusion, causing split attention, a kind of negative reinforcement.

It was proposed that the underlying reasons behind an USS were either misunderstanding of the turn signal or increased eagerness to enter. But this eagerness was usually coupled with several other factors whose individual importance is difficult to assess. An attempt was made to group these factors according to what was found to be reasonable when listening to the speaker-shifts in actual contexts. One example of eagerness or raised degree of engagement is when the new speaker objects to what the current speaker has just said. Objection and USS were significantly correlated.

It was also argued that not all cases of simultaneous turns should be equated with interruption in the full sense of the word, as has inappropriately been done in many earlier studies. This claim is chiefly based on two observations. First, a number of unsmooth speaker-shifts could neither be said to reflect dominance nor appeared to be intended to take the floor. This observation rests on these circumstances: they were brief comments of a background nature, they were often uttered with reduced loudness, ie there was no vying for the turn, and there were seldom any speech disruptions on the part of the new speaker. These dimensions were suggested to be important criteria in a definition of the concept of interruption. Another aspect which brings in a further dimension is the legitimacy of an intrusion which can be exemplified with a check-up question. Second, the interactants systematically entered as soon as they had understood or thought they had understood the intended message, at which point they disregarded the rest of the message. This was a mutually employed

technique of editing redundancy and an example of cooperation and synchronization of turns rather than of competition and blatant interruption.

No statistically significant differences related to sex or age of speaker or to the manner of recording could be found in this material.

Notes

- 1 It has also been noted that stutterers are negatively affected when not being allowed to finish what they want to say before an impatient non-stutterer enters (van Riper 1973:377).
- 2 Cf the results in the present study where 46.5% of the brief listener responses called supports occurred with an overlap (Chapter 6, Table 30) and also Yngve's (1970:573) findings.
- 3 Cf Lat. *inter-rumpere* meaning 'break off' or 'interrupt'. This is also the meaning English dictionaries give the word, 'break in upon' or 'break the continuity of'.
- 4 This was tested manually on one conversation of another corpus (Oreström forthcoming). This conversation was 32 minutes long and took place between an elderly married couple. As the transcription of speaker-shifts corresponds to the natural process in this conversation, which is not always the case in the LLC, it was well-suited for such a test. Before a grammatical analysis has been made, the criterion preliminarily used of a GB was end of TU ('#'). The result of this test was that the sentence completions and restatements, quite naturally, came out as speaker-shifts. With a simple indication in the transcription marking these non-turns, eg a unique symbol before these utterances, the list of BCs and the rules in the flow-chart will solve completely the whole task of grouping the utterances into turns and BCs. Also, of the 82 real instances of speaker-shift, as many as 80 were grouped into correct types (according to the system of analysis). This is a high figure; in only two cases was the last end of TU not identical with a GB and therefore insufficient information for a correct automatic classification into types of speaker-shift in this conversation. By introducing information about GBs in the transcription, the two residual cases would also be solved.
- 5 If the pitch contour falls too low and too rapidly, there is a risk that this will be taken as a signal of turn-finality and thus turn-yielding although this was not intended. The transmission of contradictory signals is bound to cause turn clashes (cf Beattie, Cutler & Pearson 1982).

- 6 In a broader sense, interruption is not a phenomenon that is solely evidenced linguistically. An abrupt topic shift, for instance, even if it takes place at a TRP, could be said to be a case of interruption. Such a topic interruption, which may, for example, reflect an attempt to shuffle the topic into a new field that is more interesting or more comfortable to the interrupter, is a well-known technique in debates. In informal conversation, however, where the topic is generally not decided beforehand, it is often difficult to draw a line between what is a topic shift and what is 'free association'. One raised point causes associations with a neighbouring field of interest which, in turn, gives rise to explorations into another related area, and so on. Hereby, the focus of attention is shifted again and again, slightly or considerably, when the speakers alternate to transport each other to ever new domains of interest.

Another type is when somebody (A) takes the role of somebody else (B) and answers questions put to B. This can be heard particularly in conversations between two adults (A and C) and a child:

(75) A *how old are you now, Betty?*

C *she's six*

A *how do you like school?*

C *she enjoys it*

A *do you have many friends there, Betty?*

C *well not really, she's a bit shy of meeting people*

Such exchanges of turns, which take place above the head of the questioned person, is a form of turn-stealing.

- 7 Cf Yngve (1970:568) for a similar view.
- 8 This circumstance has caused Lindström (1978:31f) to be critical of surreptitious recordings from the point of view of intonation.
- 9 Cf Schegloff (1968:1085): "some persons, polite even when interacting with a machine, will not interrupt a phone, but wait for the completion of a ring before picking up the receiver".
- 10 Conversation S.1.4 deserves a comment as it has both the highest figure for USS and the highest figure for those instances of USS which did not take place at a GB (CUT + OVER + PAR). In this conversation, the two participants are choosing pictures for their office walls and the talk changes abruptly from this topic to more departmental matters and to coffee-making. This irregular and impressionistic nature of their dialogue both concerning shift of topic and shift of speaker seems, however, to be mutually accepted. They often give the impression of being more occupied with their own minds than paying attention to the fact that they are having a conversation together. From this point of view, talk is less interactional than in the other conversations of the material.
- 11 The unclear instances were generally of a type where there was a period of several fast-shifting instances of USS closely interwoven and where it was difficult or impossible to decide who really had the floor and who interrupted whom:

- (76) B *I /mean ((I'm !always 1-2 sylls)) /spèak to her
a'bout it *((4 sylls))#**
A **are /we* are /we sup'posed to knòw# in /général#
+((2 sylls))+*
B *+well /I+ !don't !!knòw# **I /mean***
A ***do /[ais]** -*
B */I sup*!pðse 'so#**
A **/you 'heard* just *((4-5 sylls))***
B ***well ((/really)) !I (("/I'm** 'just sàying# that
[?])) /Ingeborg wòrks with her#* (S.1.4; 69)

- 12 Different speech events are differently sensitive to USS. In informal conversation between people who know each other well and where the personal contact is affiliative and non-competitive there is less demand for perfection. There is here a higher degree of tolerance with respect to the accuracy and precision with which turn-taking is executed. In such a speech event, there is seldom any strong negative reaction to USS on the part of the ongoing speaker. But in more formal and competitive speech events, like a debate, where they are concentrated on the production of convincing arguments which requires careful planning, they are much more vulnerable to intrusions as their debatal success rests on the way these arguments are shaped and uttered. They therefore expect a high degree of interactional discipline and strongly reject trespasses into their domains. This example is taken from a debate on juvenile delinquency in the LLC:

- (77) N */yes it is 'perfectly !trùe# that it in/cludes
those ə: . ə :màrginal cáses# that /you've re!fèrréd
'to# - "/bùt# - - */these /these . /wáit# . /let me
just fínish#**
L **ex/cùse 'me# "/yòur 'point# . /your "!yòur 'case#*
is an ex/ample of the cases of the "!màrginal 'ones#
*/((that is the)) point :Ì'm trying to máke#**
N **/let me . /let me . /let me . * /let me just fínish#*
(S.5.3; 20)

But it should also be said that it cannot be ruled out that an intrusion like the one above is occasionally a welcomed violation because it gives the interrupted person a chance to highlight it and make the other stand out as a blatant interrupter. Sympathy may be gained in this way which is one up for him.

- 13 Goffman (1974:36) notes that a consequence of this view of the turn as being private property is that:

interruptions and inattentiveness may convey disrespect and must be avoided unless the implied disrespect is an accepted part of the relationship

- 14 There was no example in the material of a person who considered himself interrupted and who bluntly requested the interrupter to keep quiet. One such example was found in another conversation of the LLC:

(78) C ə well /who does he wòrk for#

B /he's a !univèrsity 'lecturer# .

C ə:m

B /which 'means we're 'in for a pày rise# /I am tòò in 'fact#

C /shut ùp# . /let me "think# . (S.8.2a; 22)

In addition, somebody who is repeatedly given little time for his turn before the other enters again, will, if he accommodates to his partner, have to maximize the content and minimize the length of his turn in order to get his message through.

- 15 The return to equilibrium has been likened to a thermostat mechanism by Watzlawick et al (1967:147). When there is imbalance in the system (when the heat reaches a certain level), there is a return to the normal state (the thermostat stops activating the production of heat) and balance is restored. The strive for equilibrium is, presumably, an underlying factor in conversation.
- 16 Cf Duncan & Nederehe (1974:237) who point out that there are borderline cases between turns and longer BCs.
- 17 Such behaviour, involving a deliberate misunderstanding and deliberate interruptions, is presumably a common technique of manipulation in social mobbing used in order to isolate somebody from the rest of the group.

8 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine four aspects of the speaker-listener interaction in spontaneous, everyday dyadic conversation:

- the relation between turn-yielding, transition-relevance places, and linguistic properties
- length of a speaker's turn
- the listener's activity
- simultaneous speech and interruption

The present study was based on 10 conversations of the London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English, 4 of which were recorded surreptitiously and 6 with an open microphone.

Turn-taking was positively correlated with a number of factors in a study of four conversations of the material (Chapter 4). Subject to study were the last three tone units of every speaking-turn that was more than one tone unit long and where the shift from one speaker to the next did not involve joint talking. The result was that some 95% of such shifts took place at a point in the ongoing output which represents a joint completion on three levels: end of a completed tone unit with a non-level nuclear tone, end of a syntactically completed sequence (here a macro-syntagm in the form of a full or ellipted sentence), and end of a semantically fully rational sequence. The joint completion of these three constitutes a major juncture in speech, here labelled a 'grammatical boundary' (GB). On the interactional level, a GB is a niche in the output, a point where intonational, syntactic, and semantic relationships cease and a point of possible completion of the turn. Three GBs out of four where turn-taking took place also occurred in combination with reduced loudness in the

last tone unit starting just before the GB and/or with an accompanying pause at the GB. Reduced loudness serves as a 'pre-signal' indicating that the next GB may be such a relevant niche or transition-relevance place (TRP), particularly if the loudness conditions remain unchanged. A pause at the GB works additively increasing the chance of a TRP. The GB seems to be the primary cue and reduced loudness and pause to be secondary cues for the potential turn-taker. This would modify Duncan's (1972) findings where all cues are given the same value.

The exact relationship between a GB and a TRP cannot be fully assessed. It appears that the GB is a necessary but generally not sufficient factor with respect to turn-taking and hence not alone a proper TRP. In other words, a TRP presupposes a GB while the converse does not hold. This is judged by the fact that the listener, as a rule, selected those GBs which were also accompanied by at least one of the secondary cues rather than the bare primary one. It is the combination of the primary and secondary cues which gives a stretch its final character and which gives the listener an opportunity to reach a judgment before he takes action. A requirement for a TRP would therefore be that the GB should be combined with at least one of the secondary cues.

On the other hand, when the GB is preceded by a step-up in loudness and accompanied by no pause, which are means of protecting the turn, this cannot be called a point of possible completion of the turn and is therefore no TRP in the proper sense of the word.

As there exists no specific and unambiguous marker of turn-finality, we should be careful not to talk of 'turn-yielding signals', as Duncan (1972) does, but instead of 'signals of possible turn-yielding'. As a consequence of this, the potential turn-taker will have to calculate with probabilities. The more cues he hears, the more likely it is that he is facing the end point of the turn. The more certain he wants to be, before taking action, that his partner has terminated his turn, the more cues he will have to wait for. A person entering at a bare GB certainly takes a chance and runs the risk of making a mistake and of being seen as interrupting. The decision whether to enter at a bare GB or wait for one with more cues presumably has to do with politeness, self-control, and eagerness to take the turn.

Length of speaking-turns was measured by the number of produced words (Chapter 5). There were, as could be expected, considerable variation among the speakers both as regards the total number of turns and the total number of words. But the number of words per turn showed much greater homogeneity. When words per turn were divided into classes (1-10, 11-20, 21-30 words, etc), it was found that the statistical mode was 1-10 words, the median 11-20 words or, to be exact, 13 words, and the mean 28 words. Almost 8 turns out of 10 were 30 words or shorter. Very long turns (more than 100 words) were few and accounted only for 5.2% of all turns. A turn was observed to consist of 5.2 tone units, on an average. The surreptitiously recorded dyads had fewer short turns and more turns of medium-length and more very long turns than the dyads that were recorded with an open microphone. No difference related to sex or age of speaker could be found. It was proposed that turn length is probably another factor that distinguishes a conversation from a debate.

In Chapter 6, the listener's activity was examined. While the speaker is talking, the listener supplies him with brief feedback signals (*m*, *yes*, *that's right*, etc.), called back-channel items (BCs), signalling acceptance, agreement, and various emotional reactions. These signals are background utterances in the sense that they are not intended to take over. They rather confirm that a person is still assuming the listener role.

The problem of drawing a sharp line between statements (or assertions) and questions was also discussed. The reason why a person transmits a speaking-turn to another person is normally that he wants something back in return, a reaction or a comment. In human communication, a message is therefore coupled with a response-seeking element which can be encoded in several ways from overt interrogative form to just finishing talking, looking up at, and eyeing the partner. What is really meant by a 'question' is surely a matter of definition.

The most commonly occurring feedback signal was *m*, which accounted for about 50% of all the brief instances. This is not surprising as *m* can support both positive and negative statements. The BCs usually had a falling tone, were prosodically reduced, ie had lower loudness than the person's normal and/or a narrow pitch range and/or a low pitch level, which would be further evidence of their background character. They were also often transmitted

at a GB, a fact that indicates the central role of the GB. It is towards this major juncture that a person orients himself both when he wants to take the turn and to emit a BC. In almost half of all cases, the BCs were uttered jointly with the ongoing speech. They can probably be uttered almost anywhere in the speaker's production without being taken as interruptions.

Level tone on the BCs was the second most frequently occurring tone, three times more common among the males than the females. There are two possible explanations of this. Either the males simply did not use the full range of a fall or a rise nucleus, or they expressed indifference or boredom more often, attitudes that the level tone is said to convey.

The BCs did not only appear singly but also in series. The items of such series generally had the same tonal contour. A series was proposed to have two functions. Either it expresses a raised engagement or serves as a turn-claiming signal.

There was a clear difference in prosodic reduction between the BCs referred to as 'supports' compared with the exclamations. The latter were reduced in only 23% of all cases.

The BCs were observed to be uttered with some periodicity. About 8 out of 10 were emitted with 1-15 seconds' intervals. This suggests an interaction rule for the listener, ie a demand not to be verbally inactive for too long.

In Chapter 7 those cases of speaker-shift were examined where there was joint talking (excluded in the studies of turn signals and turn length) and which did not take place at a GB. A speaker-shift which fulfilled at least one of the two criteria was termed unsmooth speaker-shift (USS). Those shifts were found to occur with great variation of frequency in different conversations. It was noted that, when entering the conversation before the ongoing speaker had finished, the new speaker generally also took over the turn.

Various aspects of USS were examined: speed and loudness properties, length of contribution, discourse categories, floor-winning, and ongoing speaker's reactions. It was found that a step-up in loudness was an efficient means, more efficient than a step-up in speed, of both holding and taking the floor. Increased loudness is obviously a useful technique for someone wanting to force his will through in order to protect or take the turn.

A person who objected to what the ongoing speaker said tended to enter in an unsmooth manner. Objection means a raised engagement in the topic and when the emotional temperature goes up, there is a tendency for unsmooth speaker-shift.

However, it is important to make clear that not every instance of USS should be equated with interruption in the proper sense of the word. In many earlier studies, simultaneous talk has automatically been explained in terms of dominance and power. In the present study, a relatively large amount of double talking could not be explained in terms of interruption and dominance. The reasons for this were that they were brief comments of a more background character not necessarily meant to take the floor, and that there were seldom any reactions on the part of the ongoing speaker in the form of speech disruptions or raised loudness. Such utterances therefore have similarities with the BCs.

In the light of what was found, four dimensions were proposed to be adequate criteria of interruption: place of entrance (at a GB or a non-GB), length of contribution (brief or long comment), intention to take the floor as mirrored in the use of loudness properties (reduced/normal or increased), and ongoing speaker's reaction (no reaction or speech disruption). The more there are of the second alternative of each criterion, the more a speaker-shift assumes an interruptive character. A fifth dimension could be added: the legitimacy of an unsmooth contribution, for example a check-up question.

Two reasons were given for why a new speaker takes the floor through USS. One is uncertainty or misunderstanding of a turn end due to the lack of unambiguous signals of this. The other is raised eagerness to come in with one's own contribution which has to do with the priority a person gives to his own contribution over his partner's. But USS was also used as a developed technique employed by both participants where the new speaker entered and took over as soon as he had understood, or thought he had understood, the intended message. Formally, this type would answer to most or even all of the stated criteria of interruption but still seems to be a mutually accepted cooperative and synchronized way of taking the turn.

No significant differences in simultaneous speech and interruption related to sex or age of speaker or to the manner of recording could be found in this material.

Signs and symbols:

#	End of tone unit
/	Onset
{ }	Subordinate tone unit
˘	Fall
˙	Rise
-	Level
^	Rise-fall
v	Fall-rise
˘ ˘	Rise-plus-fall
˘ ˙	Fall-plus-rise
*yes	Continuance
:yes	Higher than preceding syllable
!yes	Higher than preceding pitch-prominent syllable
!!yes	Extra high
'yes	Single stress
"yes	Strong stress
yes • yes	Brief pause
yes - yes	Unit pause
- .	} Combinations of pause
- -	
- - .	
- - -	
<u>a</u> ... <u>a</u> #	Allegro ... end of allegro
<u>l</u> ... <u>l</u> #	Lento ... end of lento
<u>f</u> ... <u>f</u> #	Forte ... end of forte
<u>p</u> ... <u>p</u> #	Piano ... end of piano
<u>dim</u> ... <u>dim</u> #	Diminuendo ... end of diminuendo
<u>m</u> ... <u>m</u> #	} Modifications in voice quality (specified in the margin)
<u>m'</u> ... <u>m'</u> #	
<u>N</u>	Narrow nucleus
<u>W</u>	Wide nucleus
yès	Clipped

()	Indicates non-linguistic activity, like laughs, sighs, etc.
(())	Indicates words that are not fully clear on tape
* ... * + ... +	} Indicates simultaneous talk
[?]	
	Glottal stop

Information about the speakers:

Conversation S.1.1

Speaker A: male academic, age c. 44

Speaker B: male academic, age c. 60

Talk between two university dons (co-examiners) about, for example, setting and marking papers, personal and professional matters, a funny story, and a grammatical problem.

Conversation S.1.2:1

Speaker A: male academic, age c. 43

Speaker B: male academic, age c. 42

Talk between two university dons (both professors) about professional matters.

Conversation S.1.4

Speaker A: male academic, age c. 48

Speaker B: male academic, age c. 48

Talk between two university dons (both lecturers) about, for example, making coffee, selecting pictures for their office walls, and professional matters.

Conversation S.1.6

Speaker A: female academic, age 45

Speaker B: male academic, age 28

Talk between a lecturer (A) and a research assistant (B) about personal matters, students, and people they know.

Conversation S.4.1

Speaker A: male undergraduate, age 25

Speaker B: female housewife and teacher, age 24

Talk between husband and wife about domestic matters, like getting a baby-sitter, buying a new TV set, and about friends.

Conversation S.4.2

Speaker A: female academic, age c. 26

Speaker B: male solicitor, age c. 40

Talk between friends about houses, furniture, and driving in London.

Conversation S.5.8

Speaker A: female postgraduate student, age c. 26

Speaker B: female postgraduate student, age c. 21

Talk between friends about their friends and families.

Conversation S.5.9

Speaker A: male academic, age c. 23

Speaker B: female secretary, age c. 22

Talk between academics about their work and about people they know.

Conversation S.5.10

Speaker A: male English teacher, age c. 29

Speaker B: male English teacher, age c. 30

Talk between teachers about being a bachelor versus being married and about college life.

Conversation S.6.2

Speaker A: male academic, age c. 40

Speaker B: female ex-student, age c. 24

Talk between academics about language and literature teaching.

Turn length in TUs	Conversation																				TOTAL
	S.1.1		S.1.2:1		S.1.4		S.1.6		S.4.1		S.4.2		S.5.8		S.5.9		S.5.10		S.6.2		
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	
1-2	(47)	(37)	(57)	(46)	(14)	(19)	(72)	(56)	(105)	(71)	(10)	(10)	(48)	(71)	1	4	(67)	(47)	(808)		
3-4	14	14	6	4	28	17	13	8	21	29	30	41	5	2	29	29	3	2	17	16	328
5-6	5	9	4	5	12	17	6	7	13	14	9	16	1	1	15	11	2	2	5	8	162
7-8	6	8	2	1	5	6	5	4	4	7	5	9	5	1	10	5	1	2	5	6	97
9-10	4	2	2	(6)	2	4	3	1	2	1	5	5	2	3	4	1	2	0	1	5	55
11-12	1	3	0	3	2	10	1	2	2	3	0	5	0	0	4	2	2	1	0	4	45
13-14	2	1	1	1	0	5	1	1	2	1	1	2	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	1	24
15-16	1	0	1	2	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	5	1	1	2	0	0	1	1	3	22
17-18	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	2	0	2	12
19-20	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	2	15
>20	2	7	1	7	3	0	7	8	1	2	0	0	4	7	5	0	(9)	(7)	1	4	75
Total	83	83	37	36	109	108	53	52	117	116	156	155	29	29	121	120	22	22	97	98	1643

Table 43. Distribution of TUs per turn for all speakers. Circled frequency values correspond to modes.

Turn length in TUs	Conversation																				TOTAL
	S.1.1		S.1.2:1		S.1.4		S.1.6		S.4.1		S.4.2		S.5.8		S.5.9		S.5.10		S.6.2		
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	
1-2	56.6	44.6	54.1	16.7	52.3	42.3	26.4	36.5	61.5	48.3	67.3	45.8	34.5	34.5	39.7	59.2	4.6	18.2	69.1	48.0	49.2
3-4	73.5	61.5	70.3	27.8	78.0	58.3	50.9	51.9	79.5	73.3	86.5	72.3	51.7	41.4	63.6	83.3	18.2	27.3	86.6	64.3	69.1
5-6	79.5	72.3	81.1	41.7	89.0	74.1	62.3	65.4	90.6	85.3	92.3	82.6	55.2	44.8	76.0	92.5	27.3	36.4	91.8	72.5	79.0
7-8	86.8	81.9	86.5	44.4	93.6	79.6	71.1	73.1	94.0	91.4	95.5	88.4	72.4	48.3	84.3	96.7	31.8	45.5	96.9	78.6	84.9
9-10	91.6	84.3	91.9	61.1	95.4	83.3	77.4	75.0	95.7	92.2	98.7	91.6	79.3	58.6	87.6	97.5	40.9	45.5	97.9	83.7	88.3
11-12	92.7	88.0	91.9	69.4	97.3	92.6	79.3	78.9	97.4	94.8	98.7	94.8	79.3	58.6	90.9	99.2	50.0	50.0	97.9	87.7	91.0
13-14	95.2	89.2	94.6	72.2	97.3	97.2	81.1	80.8	99.2	95.7	99.4	96.1	79.3	65.5	91.7	100	54.6	50.0	97.9	88.8	92.5
15-16	96.4	89.2	97.3	77.8	97.3	99.1	93.0	80.8	99.2	96.6	99.4	99.4	82.8	69.0	93.4	100	54.6	54.6	99.0	91.8	93.8
17-18	96.4	90.4	97.3	77.8	97.3	99.1	84.9	82.7	99.2	97.4	99.4	99.4	86.2	72.4	95.0	100	54.6	63.6	99.0	93.9	94.5
19-20	97.6	91.6	97.3	80.6	97.3	100	86.8	84.6	99.2	98.3	100	100	86.2	75.9	95.9	100	90.9	68.2	99.0	95.9	95.4
>20	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 44. Cumulative frequencies in per cent of TUs per turn for all speakers. Figures below the line denote classes with frequency values $\geq 50\%$.

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Index

- Abercrombie, D., 21, 42, 43, 129, 163
 accelerando, 50
 acceptance, 107
 accompaniment signal, 105
 adjacency pair, 33
 age, 46, 78, 98f, 145, 153, 166
 agreement, 24, 104, 124, 133
 Albert, E.M., 37
 allegro, 50
 allegro, 50
 Allen, D.E., 104
 Allwood, J., 17, 18
 anacoluthon, 69, 83
 answer, 33, 106, 107, 158, 160, 162, 165
 anticipation 76, 129, 163
 anti-communication, 163, 165, 171
 Argyle, M., 35, 146
 assertion, 107ff, 158ff
 assumption, 18, 33, 117
 attempt-suppressing signal, 31
 attention, 104, 154, 169

 babbling, 19
 back-channel items (see also Listener responses and feedback signals), 23f, 25, 31, 84f, 104-105, 106-107, 108-134, 137, 141, 160
 Baird, A., 35
 Bald, W.-D., 123
 Bales, R.F., 44
 Ball, P., 35
 Basso, K.H., 37
 Bateson, M.C., 19
 Beattie, G.W., 35-36, 73, 148, 168n
 Beavin, J.H., 13, 16, 24, 43, 133, 171
 Bernard, J., 34
 Bernstein, B., 44
 Birdwhistell, R., 35
 Black, J.W., 74
 Blankenship, J., 154
 body, 75, 163
 body language (kinesics), 32, 35f, 73, 133
 booster, 50, 62, 63
 boredom, 123
 Borgatta, E.F., 44
 Bowman, E., 54f, 98
 Brazil, D., 75
 Brown, G., 62, 127
 Bullowa, M., 19
 Bühler, K., 17
 Cassotta, L., 34
 casualness, 33
 Chafe, W.L., 79
 Chapple, E.D., 82, 135
 check-up, 114-116, 157, 161, 165
 children's talk, 11, 17, 18, 19f, 105, 132, 134, 169
 Clancy, P., 136
 classroom, 21, 124, 156
 clipped, 50
 closed system, 14
 closing, 110, 143
 code of conduct, 44
 Colin, A.J.T., 61, 80, 82
 comment, 158f, 160f, 162, 166
 communication, 11-17, 18ff
 communicative act, 15
 compression, 120f
 conclusion, 114-115
 confirmation, 33f, 66, 105, 112, 113, 115, 117, 133
 connector, 133
 consensus, 105, 113
 content level, 16, 24
 continuation (see also turn-holding), 35, 72, 118, 164
 contract, 18
 contributory rule, 129
 convention, 18, 20, 132, 142, 163f
 conversation, 18, 19, 20-23, 25, 29, 29, 33-35, 42, 44, 109, 120, 169
 conversational bond, 104, 109, 120
 cooing, 19
 Cook, M., 146
 cooperation, 16, 18, 104, 109, 110, 121, 132, 164
 coordination, 18
 Coulthard, R.M., 75, 110, 132, 156
 crescendo, 51
 Crystal, D., 22f, 32, 39, 43, 47-57, 61f, 79-80, 123, 132
 Currie, K.L., 62
 Cushman, D., 18
 cut off, 139-141, 144, 145, 148, 166
 Cutler, A., 38, 58, 73, 168n

 Dance, F., 15
 Davy, D., 22f, 43, 61, 79
 debate, 21-23, 169-170
 decision point, 69
 declarative question, 114
 decoding, 15, 16, 110

- descending, 57
 dialogue, 19, 42
 diminuendo, 51
 discourse categories, 108ff, 156-166
 disrespect, 170
 Dittmann, A.T., 34, 36, 105, 124, 132, 134
 dominance, 146, 163
 door-opener, 132
 double-coding, 99
 downdrift, 57f
 drawled, 50, 51, 64
 Duckworth, A.P., 61, 80, 82
 Duncan, S., 23, 30-32, 36, 38, 43, 78, 82, 96, 106, 134, 137, 171
 duration, 80
 dyad, 42, 45
- eagerness 72, 164, 165
 economy, 120
 Edelsky, C., 37
 editing redundancy, 163f
 Eeg-Olofsson, M., 40
 elicit, 108ff, 157f, 160
 ellipsis, 55f, 114, 116, 121
 encoding, 15-16
 Enkvist, N.E., 58
 enthusiasm, 124, 133
 equilibrium, 153, 171
 exclamation, 107, 112, 116-117, 119, 125f
 exclamatory question, 107, 117, 119, 125f
 Exline, R.V., 36
 eye glances, 19, 35, 120, 129
- feedback signals (see also back-channel items and listener responses), 24, 37, 104-105, 131, 155
 Feldstein, S., 22, 34, 144
 Ferguson, N., 136, 146, 148
 Fidelholtz, J.L., 19
 filler, 33, 66, 113, 117f, 133
 finality, 33, 34, 78, 142, 168n
 Fiske, D.W., 43, 82, 96, 137
 floor, 16, 18, 37
 floor-holding (see turn-holding)
 floor-winning, 147, 152f, 164
 Forsheden, O., 40
 forte, 51, 111
 fortissimo, 51
 fragmentation, 56, 154
 Francis, W.N., 83
 Fraser, B., 133
 free competition, 142
- freezing, 163
 Fries, C.C., 23, 79, 105
 fundamental frequency, 80
- gaze (see also eye glances), 36
 Goffman, E., 21, 28, 34, 37, 161, 170
 Good, C.H., 33
 Gordon, T., 132
 grammatical boundary, 68-78, 127-128, 139-142, 144, 148, 156, 164, 166
 Greenbaum, S., 56, 79, 112, 114, 117
 greeting, 33
 Grice, H.P., 110, 120, 132
 Guy, R.F., 104
- Halliday, M.A.K., 11f, 20, 75, 132
 Harrigan, J.A., 24
 Hasan, R., 37
 Hayes, D.D., 136, 146, 149f, 152f
 Hein, U., 161
 held, 50
 Henne, H., 23f, 105, 107
 hesitation (see also speech disruption), 23, 153, 154-156, 164
 hidden elicit, 120
 hidden imperative, 132
 hindrance, 137, 163
 Hirschman, L., 124
 hit, 71f, 74
- idea unit, 79
 incredulity, 117
 indifference, 123
 interaction 11-17, 18ff
 interactional meaning, 128
 interpretation, 110, 121, 132, 164
 interrogative substitute, 115
 interruption, 21, 35, 135-137, 142-144, 146-164, 165f, 167-171
 intimacy signal, 113
 intrusion, 142, 170
 irony, 16
 irritation 142
- Jackson, D.D., 13, 16, 24, 43, 133, 171
 Jaffe, J., 22, 34, 82, 132, 144
 Jefferson, G., 21f, 26-30, 34, 133, 143-144
 Jespersen, O., 15f
 Johari Window, 14
 Johns, C., 75
 Johnson-Laird, P.N., 117

Jørgensen, B., 55f

Kasl, S.V., 154

Kay, C., 154

Kendon, A., 23, 24, 30, 36, 105, 136

Kenworthy, J., 62

Kessler, A.R., 19

Key, M.R., 146

kinesics (see body language)

kinetic tone (see nucleus)

Knapp, M.L., 23, 133

knockout factor, 70

Kučera, H., 83

Labov, W., 43, 109-111, 115

Lakoff, R., 18, 33, 109, 133

Lalljee, M., 146

language functions, 11-17

lax, 57

Leech, G., 56, 79, 111f, 114, 117

Lehiste, I., 58, 72, 80

lentissimo, 50, 79

lento, 50

Lewis, D., 18

Lindemann E., 135

Lindström, O., 169

listener, 13, 24f 29-30, 32, 68, 70, 75-78, 104-134

listener responses (see also back-channel items and feedback signals) 22, 24, 105, 136

listener role, 25, 30, 35, 104, 107, 128

listening, 17, 24, 36

listening-mode, 24

Llewellyn, L.G., 34, 36, 105, 124, 134

Loman, B., 55f

loudness, 51, 65, 70, 71-75, 77, 79, 111, 121, 137, 143, 147-153, 161-162

Luft, J., 13

Lyons, J., 55f

Maclay, H., 35

macrosyntagm, 55f, 77

Mahl, G.F., 154

Malinowski, B., 12 17 34

Malmberg, B., 134

manner of recording, 40, 43-46, 78, 86, 98, 100-102, 153, 166

Markel, N.N., 37, 105

Matarazzo, J.D., 135

McIntosh, A., 20

McQuail, D., 12f

Meltzer, L., 136 146 149f 152f

measure for measure, 164

message, 15, 16, 23

Miller, G.A., 22

Mishler, E.G., 44

mitigation, 133

monitoring, 20, 43, 44

monologue, 19, 42

Morris, W.N., 136, 146, 149f, 152f

narrowing, 123

negotiation, 35, 124, 163

new information, 75, 133

Nichols, R., 17

Niederehe, G., 23, 106, 134, 171

Nielsen, G., 35

nods, 36

Nordström, H., 58

noticed event, 26

nucleus (kinetic tone), 47-49, 61-63, 72, 75-77, 80, 118f, 121, 123

objection, 107, 132, 158-160, 165

onset, 47, 50

open microphone, 43f

open system, 14

opening, 110 143

Oreström, B., 40, 80, 128, 168n

Osgood, C.E., 35

overlap, 139-141, 144-145, 148, 161, 166

Owen, M., 138

Östman, J.-E., 133

paragraph, 72, 78, 80

parallel, 139-141, 145, 148, 161-162

paranetical remark, 161

participatory role, 38

pause:

silent (unfilled), 21, 34, 35, 57, 67f, 69, 71f, 73, 75-77, 80, 142, 144, 154

voiced (filled), 35, 57, 67f, 72, 154

Pearson, M., 38, 58, 73, 168n

periodicity, 129

personal relationship, 39, 41, 120

phatic communion, 34

Philips, S.U., 21

phonemic clause, 32, 134

pianissimo, 51, 121f

piano, 51, 121f

pitch range:

level, 49, 51, 62, 63, 65, 121, width, 49, 51f, 65, 121

- politeness, 72, 109, 169
 polylogue, 42
 possible completion, 32, 68, 72
 Poyatos, F., 36
 pre-signal, 73f, 77
 prevention, 162
 primary cue, 72, 78
 proclaiming tone, 76
 prosodic ellipsis, 80
 prosodic reduction, 121f 125f
 prosody, 32, 47ff
 protection, 73, 75, 152
 proto-conversation, 19
 pseudocommunication, 34
- question, 29, 33, 106-108, 110-121, 133, 157f, 160-162, 165
 Quirk, R., 32, 39, 42-43, 56, 61, 79, 80, 82, 112, 113, 114, 117
- rallentando, 50
 reading, 17
 referent, 12, 16, 111
 referring tone, 76
 reformulation, 56, 66, 83, 154
 register, 20
 Rehbock, H., 24
 relationship level, 16, 24
 repetition, 56, 66, 83, 117, 154-155
 response-seeking, 33, 66, 113, 115, 119-120
 restatement, 106f, 126, 141
 rhetorical question, 127f
 rhythm, 129
 Riper, C. van, 168n
 Rommetveit, R., 15, 18, 120, 121
 Rosengren, K.E., 108
 rule, 18, 21, 26, 27, 135, 144, 156
 running hypothesis, 30
 Rusiecki, J.P.L., 61, 80, 82
- Saario, A., 128
 Sacks, H., 21f, 26-29, 33, 133, 144
 Sankoff, D., 70
 Saslow, G., 135
 Satir, V., 14
 Schegloff, E.A., 21f, 26-29, 33, 133, 144, 169
 secondary cue, 72, 78
 self-control, 72
 self-interruption, 144
 self-selection, 27f
 semantics, 57, 68, 71, 77
 sentence completion, 106f, 126, 141
- sex, 46, 78, 81, 82, 86, 96f, 102, 123, 145-148, 153, 166
 shared knowledge, 110, 115, 132
 Shields, M.M., 33, 132, 135
 silence, 26, 28, 34
 simultaneous talk, 30, 32, 75, 85, 128, 135-171
 simultaneous start, 139-141, 144, 145, 148
 simultaneous turns, 137-171
 Sinclair, J.McH., 110, 111, 132, 156
 slurred, 57
 small talk, 34
 Smith, H.L., 32
 smooth speaker-shift, 139-142, 144, 158
 Snow, C.E., 19
 social role, 38
 socialization, 19f
 sociocentric sequence, 31
 Sorhus, H., 34
 speaker, 13, 24f, 28-32, 68, 70, 78, 104-105, 120, 127-128, 142
 speaker role, 25, 30, 35, 124
 speaking, 17, 24
 speaking-mode, 24, 138
 speaking-time, 82
 speech act, 109, 111, 132, 133
 speech community, 18
 speech disruption (see also hesitation), 137, 153-156, 161-162, 166
 speech event, 20-23, 120, 170
 Speier, M., 29, 150
 standardized usage, 18
 statement (see also assertion), 110, 112, 114
 status, 39, 41
 Steedman, M.J., 117
 Stenström, A.B., 119
 Stephan, F.F., 44
 Stevens, L.A., 17
 stress, 49, 62
 Strevens, P., 20
 Strodbeck, F.L., 82
 subordination, 48, 61, 123
 support, 107-108, 121-124, 126-131, surprise, 117
 surreptitious recording, 43, 143, 169
 Svartvik, J., 40, 42, 56, 61, 79, 80, 82, 111f, 114, 117
 switching pause, 34
 syntax, 27, 32-33, 52ff, 65, 68, 71, 155f, 162

- tag question, 22, 23, 56, 66f, 112, 113, 117-119, 120, 133
- tail, 75, 163
- talking, 17, 36
- tempo (speed), 29, 50, 64, 70, 74f, 79, 143, 147-153
- termination (see also finality and turn-yielding), 29, 32, 34, 72, 73
- textual role, 37
- tone unit, 39, 47, 68, 71, 77, 79-80, 83, 102
- Togeb, O., 142
- topic, 23, 25, 73
- topic interruption, 169
- topic shift, 169
- Trager, G.G., 32
- transition-relevance place, 27-30, 32, 72ff, 77, 78, 142, 163
- Trudgill, P., 34
- turn, 18, 20, 23-26, 29-30, 37ff,
- turn initiator, 126
- turn length, 82-103, 181f,
- turn-claiming signal, 31, 124, 155
- turn-holding signal (see also continuation), 31, 34f, 72, 118, 133, 152, 155
- turn-stealing, 169
- turn-taking, 18ff, 21, 25-26
- turn-taking mechanism, 30f
- turn-taking process, 26ff
- turn-yielding signal (see also finality and termination), 31-34, 36, 47ff, 66, 72, 78, 113, 117, 142

- uncertainty, 115, 120
- unsmooth speaker-shift, 138-171
- utterance, 23f

- verbal duelling, 153f
- verbal tic, 34

- Watzlawick, P., 13, 16, 24, 43, 133, 171
- West, C., 146-148
- Wiemann, J.M., 23, 133
- Wiens, A.N., 135

- Yngve, V.H., 22, 23, 168, 169,
you know, you see, 22, 32, 33f, 56, 66f, 78, 117-119, 133

- Zimmerman, D.H., 146-148
- Zipf, G.K., 120

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From the past decade on, turn-taking has received increased attention from scholars representing various disciplines. It is a topic that will, in different degrees, concern anyone interested in the study of conversation.

The present study, based on the London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English, deals with four aspects of the phenomenon: the linguistic properties related to turn-taking, the length of a speaker's turn, the listener's activity, and simultaneous speech and interruption.

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